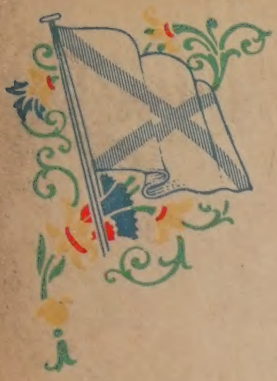

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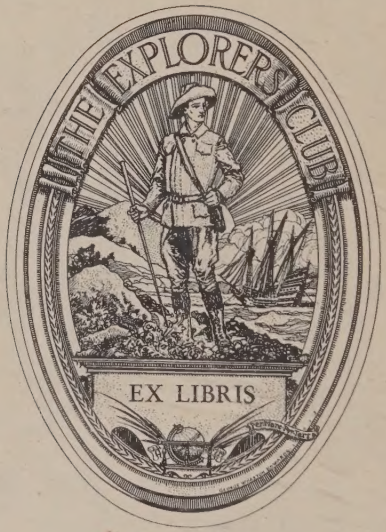

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ORIENTAL SERIES

RUSSIA

ITS HISTORY AND CONDITION TO 1877

VOLUME II

BY

SIR DONALD MACKENZIE WALLACE
K.C.I.E., K.C.V.O.

TWO PEASANT WOMEN

J. B. MILLET COMPANY
BOSTON AND TOKYO

TWO PEASANT WOMEN

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VOLUME XXIII

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EDITORIAL NOTE

SOME slight rearrangement of the great series of tableaux in which Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace displayed the history and condition of Russia and its people has seemed to be desirable in this presentation of them to the American people. Some of the matter which the progress of time has rendered out of date has been omitted, and many references to events occurring at or about the time the work was first written have been expunged. But, as the author writes frankly from the English point of view and England's relations with Russia are of world-wide importance, nothing has been done that would vitally affect the text.

The first volume presented a series of pictures of the great historic past, together with some interesting and valuable personal experiences of the author in Russia at the time of his first writing the book. The present volume deals in general with the social and religious conditions of the people: the various social classes are described, and the effect of European influence upon them is carefully traced; the relations of Church and State, and the status of the Dissenters, are placed in their proper perspective; the origin and growth of serfdom and the great movement of the nineteenth century in Russia, the emancipation of the serfs and its consequences, are studied and discussed in minute detail and with a clear broad outlook.

CHARLES WELSH.

RUSSIA

VOL. II

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CHAPTER I

SOCIAL CLASSES

I HAVE repeatedly used the expression "Social Classes," and probably more than once the reader has felt inclined to ask, What are social classes in the Russian sense of the term? It may be well, therefore, before going further, to answer this question.

If the question were put to a Russian it is not at all unlikely that he would reply somewhat in this fashion: "In Russia there are no social classes, and there never have been any. That fact constitutes one of the most striking peculiarities of her historical development, and one of the surest foundations of her future greatness. We know nothing, and have never known anything, of those class-distinctions and class-enmities which in Western Europe have often rudely shaken society in past times, and imperil its existence in the future."

This statement will not be readily accepted by the traveller who visits Russia with no preconceived ideas and forms his opinions from his own observations. To him it seems that class-distinctions form one of the most prominent characteristics of Rus-

sian society. In a few days he learns to distinguish the various classes by their outward appearance. He easily recognises the French-speaking nobles in West-European costume; the burly, bearded merchant in black cloth cap and long, shiny, double-breasted coat; the priest with his uncut hair and flowing robes; the peasant with his full, fair beard and unsavoury, greasy sheep-skin. Meeting everywhere those well-marked types, he naturally assumes that Russian society is composed of exclusive castes; and this first impression will be fully confirmed by a glance at the Code. Of the fifteen volumes which form the codified legislation, he finds that an entire volume — and by no means the smallest — is devoted to the rights and obligations of the various classes. From this he concludes that the classes have a legal as well as an actual existence.

Armed with these materials, the traveller goes to his Russian friends who have assured him that their country knows nothing of class-distinctions. He is confident of being able to convince them that they have been labouring under a strange delusion, but he will be disappointed. They will tell him that these laws and statistics prove nothing, and that the categories therein mentioned are mere administrative fictions.

This apparent contradiction is to be explained by the equivocal meaning of the Russian terms "Sosloviya" and "Sostoyaniya," which are commonly translated "social classes." If by these terms are meant "castes" in the Oriental sense, then it may be

confidently asserted that such do not exist in Russia. Between the nobles, the clergy, the burghers, and the peasants there are no distinctions of race and no impassable barriers. The peasant often becomes a merchant, and there are many cases on record of peasants and sons of parish priests becoming nobles. Until very recently the parish clergy composed, as we have seen, a peculiar and exclusive class, with many of the characteristics of a caste; but this has been changed, and it may now be said that in Russia there are no castes in the Oriental sense.

If the word Soslovié be taken to mean an organised political unit with an *esprit de corps* and a clearly-conceived political aim, it may likewise be admitted that there are none in Russia. As there has been for centuries no political life among the subjects of the Tsars, there have been no political parties.

On the other hand, however, to say that social classes have never existed in Russia and that the categories which appear in the legislation and in the official statistics are mere administrative fictions, is a piece of gross exaggeration.

From the very beginning of Russian history we can detect unmistakably the existence of social classes, such as the princes, the Boyars, the armed followers of the princes, the peasantry, the slaves, and various others; and one of the oldest legal documents which we possess — the "Russian Right" (Rússkaya Pravda) of the Grand Prince Yaroslaff (1019–1054) — contains irrefragable proof, in the

penalties attached to various crimes, that these classes were formally recognised by the legislation. Since that time they have frequently changed their character, but they have never at any period ceased to exist.

In ancient times, when there was very little administrative regulation, the classes had perhaps no clearly-defined boundaries, and the peculiarities which distinguished them from each other were actual rather than legal—lying in the mode of life and social position rather than in peculiar obligations and privileges. But as the autocratic power developed and strove to transform the nation into a State with a highly-centralised administration, the legal element in the social distinctions became more and more prominent. For financial and other purposes the people had to be divided into various categories. The existing actual distinctions were of course taken as the basis of the legal classification, but the classifying had more than a merely formal significance. The necessity of clearly defining the different groups entailed the necessity of elevating and strengthening the barriers which already existed between them, and the difficulty of passing from one group to another was thereby increased. To take a concrete instance as an illustration: so long as there was no strict administrative supervision and regulation, a peasant might easily pass into the armed following of the prince, or an armed follower of the prince might become a simple peasant; but when the administrative regulation increased — especially when

it became customary to tax persons instead of property — this passing from one class to another could not be allowed without restriction, for it might diminish the obligations which the individual had to fulfil. Even when there was no diminution, but merely a change, of obligations, it could not always be permitted, because the movement might assume serious dimensions, and thereby disturb the equilibrium between the various classes. So at least thought the Tsars, and they accordingly came to adopt the general principle that no one should leave the class in which he had been born. All this we have already seen illustrated in the history of the parish clergy.

In this work of classification Peter the Great especially distinguished himself. With his insatiable passion for regulation, he raised formidable barriers between the different categories, and defined the obligations of each with microscopic minuteness. After his death the work was carried on in the same spirit, and the tendency reached its climax in the reign of Nicholas, when the number of students to be received in the universities was determined by Imperial ukase!

It may seem strange to Englishmen that rulers should voluntarily take upon themselves the herculean task of regulating the relative numerical force of the different social classes, when it might be much better fulfilled by the principle of supply and demand, without legislative interference; but it must be remembered that the Russian Govern-

ment has always placed more confidence in bureaucratic wisdom than in the instincts and common sense of the people.

In the reign of Catherine a new element was introduced into the official conception of social classes. Down to her time the Government had thought merely of class-obligations; under the influence of Western ideas she introduced the conception of class-rights. She wished, as we have seen, to have in her Empire a noblesse and a *tiers-état* like those which existed in France, and for this purpose she granted, first to the Dvoryánstvo and afterwards to the towns, an Imperial Charter, or Bill of Rights. Succeeding sovereigns have acted in the same spirit, and the Code now confers on each class numerous privileges as well as numerous obligations.

Thus, we see, the oft-repeated assertion, that the Russian social classes are simply artificial categories created by the legislation, is to a certain extent true, but is by no means accurate. The social groups, such as peasants, landed proprietors, and the like, came into existence in Russia, as in other countries, by the simple force of circumstances. The legislature merely recognised and developed the social distinctions which already existed. The legal status, obligations, and rights of each group were minutely defined and regulated, and legal barriers were added to the actual barriers which separated the groups from each other.

What is peculiar in the historical development of

Russia is this: until lately she remained an almost exclusively agricultural Empire with abundance of unoccupied land. Her history presents, therefore, few of those conflicts which result from the variety of social conditions and the intensified struggle for existence. Certain social groups were, indeed, formed in the course of time, but they were never allowed to fight out their own battles. The irresistible autocratic power kept them always in check and fashioned them into whatever form it thought proper, defining minutely and carefully their obligations, their rights, their mutual relations, and their respective positions in the political organisation. Hence we find in the history of Russia almost no trace of those class-hatreds which appear so conspicuously in the history of Western Europe.

The practical consequence of all this is that in Russia at the present day there is very little caste spirit or caste prejudice. We have already seen how the nobles and the recently-emancipated peasantry work amicably together in the Zemstvo, and many similar curious facts are to be met with in the history of the Emancipation. The confident anticipation of many Russians that their country will one day enjoy political life without political parties is, if not a contradiction in terms, at least a Utopian absurdity; but we may be sure that when political parties do appear they will be very different from those which exist in Germany, France, and England.

CHAPTER II

CHURCH AND STATE

HAVING often heard that the Russians were an intensely religious people, I was somewhat surprised to find, during my first sojourn in St. Petersburg, that those with whom I came in contact seemed singularly indifferent to religious matters. Though uncompromising adherents of the Greek Orthodox Church and accustomed to observe to a certain extent its rites and ceremonies, they appeared to be free alike from deep religious feeling and from shallow religious cant. Some friends to whom I communicated this impression endeavoured to explain it by reminding me that St. Petersburg was a cosmopolitan rather than a Russian city, and assured me that I should find the genuine Russian spirit in the inhabitants of Moscow.

My subsequent prolonged acquaintance with the Moscovites tended to confirm rather than dispel the impression received in St. Petersburg, and fully convinced me that the Russian educated classes, though warmly attached to their Church, are in general not at all "religious" in the sense in which we commonly use the word. I found, however, in the

ancient capital, especially among those who were more or less tinged with Slavophil sentiment, a certain number of persons who evidently took a deep interest in ecclesiastical affairs. They assured me that Orthodoxy was one of the most essential elements of Russian nationality, and that I could not possibly understand the past history and present condition of Russia without knowing the past history and actual condition of the National Church. Though this statement seemed to me a little too strong, I considered it advisable to devote some attention to the subject, and I propose now to present to the reader a few of the more important results of my studies in that field.

If the Popes did not succeed in realising their grand design of creating a vast European empire based on theocratic principles, they succeeded at least in inspiring with a feeling of brotherhood and a vague consciousness of common interest all the nations which acknowledged their spiritual supremacy. These nations, whilst remaining politically independent and frequently coming into hostile contact with each other, all looked to Rome as the capital of the Christian world, and to the Pope as the highest terrestrial authority. Though the Church did not annihilate nationality, it made a wide breach in the political barriers, and formed a channel for international communication, by which the social and intellectual progress of each nation became known to all the other members of the great Christian confederacy. Throughout the length and breadth

of the Papal Commonwealth, educated men had a common language, a common literature, a common scientific method, and to a certain extent a common jurisprudence. Western Christendom was thus not merely an abstract conception or a geographical expression; if not a political, it was at least a religious and intellectual, unit.

For centuries Russia stood outside of this religious and intellectual confederation, for her Church connected her not with Rome but with Constantinople, and Papal Europe looked upon her as belonging to the barbarous East. When the Tartar hosts swept over her plains, burnt her towns and villages, and finally incorporated her into the Great Mongol Empire, the so-called Christian world took no interest in the struggle except in so far as its own safety was threatened. And as time wore on, the barriers which separated the two great sections of Christendom became more and more formidable. The aggressive pretensions and ambitious schemes of the Vatican produced in the Greek Orthodox world a profound antipathy to the Roman Catholic Church and to Western influence of every kind. So strong was this aversion, that when the nations of the West awakened in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries from their intellectual lethargy and began to move forward on the path of intellectual and material progress, Russia not only remained unmoved, but looked on the new civilisation with suspicion and fear as a thing heretical and accursed. We have here one of the chief reasons why Russia,

at the present day, is in many respects less civilised than the nations of Western Europe.

But it is not merely in this negative way that the acceptance of Christianity from Constantinople has affected the fate of Russia. The Greek Church, whilst excluding Roman Catholic civilisation, exerted at the same time a powerful positive influence on the historical development of the nation.

The Church of the West inherited from old Rome something of that logical, juridical, administrative spirit which had created the Roman law, and something of that ambition and dogged, energetic perseverance that had formed nearly the whole known world into a great centralised empire. The Bishops of Rome early conceived the design of reconstructing that old empire on a new basis, and have ever striven to create a universal Christian theocratic State, in which kings and other civil authorities should be the subordinates of Christ's Vicar upon earth. The Eastern Church, on the contrary, has remained true to her Byzantine traditions, and has never dreamed of such lofty pretensions. Accustomed to lean on the civil power, she has always been content to play a secondary part, and has never strenuously resisted the formation of national churches.

For about two centuries after the introduction of Christianity — from 988 till 1240 — Russia formed, ecclesiastically speaking, part of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The metropolitans and the bishops were Greeks by birth and education, and the ecclesiastical administration was guided and controlled

by the Byzantine Patriarchs. But from the time of the Tartar invasion, when the communications with Constantinople became more difficult and educated native priests had become more numerous, this complete dependence on the Patriarch ceased. The Princes gradually arrogated to themselves the right of choosing the Metropolitan of Kief — who was at that time the chief ecclesiastical dignitary in Russia — and merely sent their nominees to Constantinople for consecration. About 1448 this formality came to be dispensed with, and the Metropolitan was commonly consecrated by a council of Russian bishops. A further step in the direction of ecclesiastical autonomy was taken in 1589, when the Tsar succeeded in procuring the consecration of a Russian Patriarch, equal in dignity and authority to the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria.

In all matters of external form the Patriarch of Moscow was a very important personage. He exercised a considerable influence in civil as well as ecclesiastical affairs, bore the official title of "great lord" (*velíki gosudár*), which had previously been reserved for the civil head of the State, and habitually received from the people scarcely less veneration than the Tsar himself. But in reality he possessed very little independent power. The Tsar was the real ruler in ecclesiastical as well as in civil affairs.[1]

[1] As this is frequently denied by Russians, it may be well to quote one authority out of many that might be cited. Bishop Makarii, whose erudition and good faith are alike above suspicion, says of Dimitry of the Don: "He arrogated to himself full, unconditional power over the Head of the Russian

The Russian Patriarchate came to an end in the time of Peter the Great. Peter wished among other things to reform the ecclesiastical administration, and to introduce into his country many novelties which the majority of the clergy and of the people regarded as heretical; and he clearly perceived that a bigoted energetic Patriarch might throw considerable obstacles in his way, and cause him infinite annoyance. Though such a Patriarch might be deposed without any flagrant violation of the canonical formalities, the operation would necessarily be attended with great trouble and loss of time. Peter was no friend of roundabout tortuous methods, and preferred to remove the difficulty in his usual thorough violent fashion. When the Patriarch Adrian died, the customary short interregnum was prolonged for twenty years, and when the people had thus become accustomed to having no Patriarch, it was announced that no more Patriarchs would be elected. Their place was supplied by an ecclesiastical council or Synod, in which, as a contemporary explained, "the mainspring was Peter's power, and the pendulum his understanding." The great autocrat justly considered that such a council could be much more easily managed than a stubborn Patriarch, and the wisdom of the measure has been

Church, and through him over the whole Russian Church itself" ("Istóriya Rússkoi Tserkvi," V., p. 101). This is said of a Grand Prince who had strong rivals and had to treat the Church as an ally. When the Grand Princes became Tsars and had no longer any rivals, their power was certainly not diminished. Any further confirmation that may be required will be found in the life of the famous Patriarch Nikon.

duly appreciated by succeeding sovereigns. Though the idea of re-establishing the Patriarchate has more than once been raised, it has never been carried into execution. The Holy Synod remains, and is likely to remain, the highest ecclesiastical authority.

But the Emperor? What is his relation to the Synod and to the Church in general?

This is a question about which zealous Orthodox Russians are extremely sensitive. If a foreigner ventures to hint in their presence that the Emperor seems to have a considerable influence in the Church, he may inadvertently produce a little outburst of patriotic warmth and virtuous indignation. The truth is that many Russians have a pet theory on this subject, and have at the same time a dim consciousness that the theory is not quite in accordance with reality. They hold theoretically that the Orthodox Church has no "Head" but Christ, and is in some peculiar, undefined sense entirely independent of all terrestrial authority. In this respect it is often compared with the Anglican Church, and the comparison is made a theme for semi-religious, semi-patriotic exultation, which finds expression not only in conversation, but also in the literature. Khomiakóf, for instance, in one of his most vigorous poems, predicts that God will one day take the destiny of the world out of the hands of England in order to give it to Russia, and he adduces as one of the reasons for this transfer the fact that England "has chained, with sacrilegious hand, the Church of God to the pedestal of the vain earthly

power." So far the theory. As to the facts, it is unquestionable that the Church enjoys much more liberty in England than in Russia, and that the Tsar exercises a much greater influence in ecclesiastical affairs than the King and Parliament. All who know the internal history of Russia are aware that the Government does not draw a clear line of distinction between the temporal and the spiritual, and that it occasionally uses the ecclesiastical organisation for political purposes.

What then are the relations between Church and State?

To avoid confusion, we must carefully distinguish between the Eastern Orthodox Church as a whole and that section of it which is known as the Russian Church.

The Eastern Orthodox Church[1] is, properly speaking, a confederation of independent churches without any central authority — a unity founded on the possession of a common dogma and on the theoretical but now unrealisable possibility of holding Ecumenical Councils. The Russian National Church is one of the members of this ecclesiastical confederation. In matters of faith, it is bound by the decisions of the ancient Ecumenical Councils, but in all other respects it enjoys complete independence and autonomy.

In relation to the Orthodox Church as a whole, the Emperor of Russia is nothing more than a simple member, and can no more interfere with its dogmas

[1] Or Greek Orthodox Church, as it is sometimes called.

or ceremonial than a King of Italy or an Emperor of the French could modify Roman Catholic theology; but in relation to the Russian National Church his position is peculiar. He is described in one of the fundamental laws as "the supreme defender and preserver of the dogmas of the dominant faith," and immediately afterwards it is said, "the autocratic power acts in the ecclesiastical administration by means of the most Holy Governing Synod, created by it."[1] This describes very fairly the relations between the Emperor and the Church. He is merely the defender of the dogmas, and cannot in the least modify them; but he is at the same time the chief administrator, and uses the Synod as an instrument.

Some ingenious people who wish to prove that the creation of the Synod was not an innovation represent the institution as a resuscitation of the ancient Local Councils; but this view is utterly untenable. The Synod is not a council of deputies from various sections of the Church, but a permanent college, or ecclesiastical senate, the members of which are appointed and dismissed by the Emperor as he thinks fit. It has no independent legislative authority, for its legislative projects do not become law till they have received the Imperial sanction; and they are always published, not in the name of the Church, but in the name of the Supreme Power. Even in matters of simple administration it is not independent, for all its resolutions require the consent of the Procureur, a layman

[1] Svod Zakonov I., §§ 42, 43.

nominated by his Majesty. In theory this functionary protests only against those resolutions which are not in accordance with the civil law of the country; but as he alone has the right to address the Emperor directly on ecclesiastical concerns, and as all communications between the Emperor and the Synod pass through his hands, he possesses in reality considerable power. Besides this, he can always influence the individual members by holding out prospects of advancement and decorations, and if this device fails, he can make the refractory members retire, and fill up their places with men of more pliable disposition. A council constituted in this way cannot, of course, display much independence of thought or action, especially in a country like Russia, where no one ventures to oppose openly the Imperial will.[1]

It must not, however, be supposed that the Russian ecclesiastics regard the Imperial authority with jealousy or dislike. They are all most loyal subjects, and warm adherents of autocracy. Those ideas of ecclesiastical independence which are so common in Western Europe, and that spirit of opposition to the civil power which animates the Roman Catholic clergy, are entirely foreign to their minds. If a bishop sometimes complains to an intimate friend

[1] The Synod has shown a most decided opposition to an important part of the ecclesiastical reforms which have been undertaken by the Procureur. This would seem to show, as some of my Russian friends point out to me, that the Synod is by no means so docile as I have represented it. In fairness I state the fact; but I must add that, before drawing any general conclusions, we must know the *histoire secrète* of the affair.

that he has been brought to St. Petersburg and made a member of the Synod, merely to append his signature to official papers and to give his consent to foregone conclusions, his displeasure is directed, not against the Emperor, but against the Procureur. He is full of loyalty and devotion to the Tsar, and has no desire to see his Majesty excluded from all influence in ecclesiastical affairs; but he feels saddened and humiliated when he finds that the whole government of the Church is in the hands of a lay functionary, who may be a military man, and who certainly looks at all matters from a layman's point of view.

A foreigner who hears ecclesiastics grumble or laymen express dissatisfaction with the existing state of things is apt to imagine that a secret struggle is going on between Church and State, and that a party favourable to Disestablishment is at present being formed. In reality there is no such struggle and no such party. I have heard Russians propose and discuss every conceivable kind of political and social reforms, but I have never heard any of them speak about disestablishing the Church. Indeed, I do not know how the idea could be expressed in Russian, except by a lengthy circumlocution. So long as the autocratic power exists, no kind of administration can be exempted from Imperial control.

This close connection between Church and State and the thoroughly national character of the Russian Church is well illustrated by the history of the local ecclesiastical administration. The civil and

the ecclesiastical administration have always had the same character and have always been modified by the same influences. The terrorism which was largely used by the Muscovite Tsars and brought to a climax by Peter the Great appeared equally in both. In the episcopal circulars, as in the Imperial ukases, we find frequent mention of "most cruel corporal punishment," "cruel punishment with whips, so that the delinquent and others may not acquire the habit of practising such insolence," and much more of the same kind. And these terribly severe measures were sometimes directed against very venial offences. The Bishop of Vologda, for instance, in 1748 decrees "cruel corporal punishment" against priests who wear coarse and ragged clothes,[1] and the records of the Consistorial courts contain abundant proof that such decrees were rigorously executed. When Catherine II. introduced a more humane spirit into the civil administration, corporal punishment was at once abolished in the Consistorial courts, and the procedure was modified according to the accepted maxims of civil jurisprudence. But I must not weary the reader with tiresome historical details. Suffice it to say that, from the time of Peter the Great downwards, the character of all the more energetic sovereigns is reflected in the history of the ecclesiastical administration.

Each province, or "government," forms a diocese,

[1] Známenski, "Prikhódskoe Dukhovénstvo v Rossíi so vrémeni refórmy Petrá," Kazán, 1873.

and the bishop, like the civil governor, has a council which theoretically controls his power, but practically has no controlling influence whatever. The Consistorial council, which has in the theory of ecclesiastical procedure a very imposing appearance, is in reality the bishop's *chancellerie*, and its members are little more than secretaries, whose chief object is to make themselves agreeable to their superior. And it must be confessed that so long as they remain what they are, the less power they possess, the better it will be for those who have the misfortune to be under their jurisdiction. The higher dignitaries have at least larger aims and a certain consciousness of the dignity of their position, but the lower officials, who have no such healthy restraints and receive ridiculously small salaries, grossly misuse the little authority which they possess, and habitually pilfer and extort in the most shameless manner. The Consistories are in fact what the public offices were in the time of Nicholas.

The ecclesiastical administration is entirely in the hands of the monks, or "Black Clergy," as they are commonly termed, who form a large and influential class.

The monks who first settled in Russia were, like those who first visited North-Western Europe, men of the earnest, ascetic, missionary type. Filled with zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, they took little or no thought for the morrow, and devoutly believed that their Heavenly Father, without whose knowledge no sparrow falls to the ground,

would provide for their humble wants. Poor, clad in rags, eating the most simple fare, and ever ready to share what they had with any one poorer than themselves, they performed faithfully and earnestly the work which their Master had given them to do. But this ideal of monastic life soon gave way in Russia, as in the West, to practices less simple and severe. By the liberal donations and bequests of the faithful the monasteries became rich in gold, in silver, in precious stones, and above all in land and serfs. Troitsa, for instance, possessed at one time 120,000 serfs and a proportionate amount of land, and it is said that at the beginning of the eighteenth century more than a fourth of the entire population had fallen under the jurisdiction of the Church. Many of the monasteries engaged in commerce, and the monks were, if we may credit Fletcher, who visited Russia in 1588, the most intelligent merchants of the country.

During the eighteenth century the Church lands were secularised, and the serfs of the Church became serfs of the State. This was a severe blow for the monasteries, but it did not prove fatal, as many people predicted. Some monasteries were abolished and others were reduced to extreme poverty, but many survived and prospered. These could no longer possess serfs, but they had still three sources of revenue: a limited amount of real property, Government subsidies, and the voluntary offerings of the faithful. At present there are about 500 monastic establishments, and the great majority of them, though not

wealthy, have revenues more than sufficient to satisfy all the requirements of an ascetic life.

Thus in Russia, as in Western Europe, the history of monastic institutions is composed of three chapters, which may be briefly entitled: asceticism and missionary enterprise; wealth, luxury, and corruption; secularisation of property and decline. But between Eastern and Western monasticism there is at least one marked difference. The monasticism of the West made at various epochs of its history a vigorous, spontaneous effort at self-regeneration, which found expression in the foundation of separate Orders, each of which proposed to itself some special aim — some special sphere of usefulness. In Russia we find no similar phenomenon. Here the monasteries never deviated from the rules of St. Basil, which restrict the members to religious ceremonies, prayer, and contemplation. From time to time a solitary individual raised his voice against the prevailing abuses, or retired from his monastery to spend the remainder of his days in ascetic solitude; but neither in the monastic population as a whole, nor in any particular monastery, do we find at any time a spontaneous, vigorous movement towards reform. During the last two hundred years reforms have certainly been effected, but they have all been the work of the civil power, and in the realisation of them the monks have shown little more than the virtue of resignation. Here, as elsewhere, we have evidence of that inertness, apathy, and want of spontaneous vigour which form one of the most

characteristic traits of Russian national life. In this, as in other departments of national activity, the spring of action has lain not in the people but in the Government.

My personal acquaintance with the Russian monasteries is too slight to enable me to speak with authority regarding their actual condition, but I may say that during casual visits to some of them I have always been disagreeably impressed by the vulgar, commercial spirit which seemed to reign in the place. Several of them have appeared to me little better than houses of refuge for the indolent, and I have had on more than one occasion good grounds for concluding that among monks, as among ordinary mortals, indolence leads to drunkenness and other vices.

If there is anything that may be called party-feeling in the Russian Church, it is the feeling of hostility which exists between the White and the Black Clergy — that is to say, between the parish priests and the monks. The parish priests consider it very hard that they should have nearly all the laborious duties and none of the honours of their profession. The monks, on the other hand, look on the parish priest as a kind of ecclesiastical half-caste, and think that he ought to obey his superiors without grumbling.

This antagonism, together with the general enthusiasm for every species of reform which has characterised the present reign, has produced a certain appearance of movement in the Russian clerical

world, and has induced some sanguine persons, imbued with Western ideas, to believe that there is a movement in the deep waters, and that the Church is about to throw off her venerable lethargy. Such expectations cannot, I think, be entertained by any one who has studied carefully and dispassionately her past history and present condition. Anything at all resembling what we understand by a religious revival is in flagrant contradiction with all her traditions. Immobility and passive resistance to external influences have always been, and are still, her fundamental principles of conduct. She prides herself on being above terrestrial influences. During the last two centuries Russia has undergone an uninterrupted series of profound modifications — political, intellectual, and moral — but the spirit of the National Church has remained unchanged. The modifications that have been made in her administrative organisation have not affected her inner nature. In spirit and character she is now what she was under the Patriarchs in the time of the Muscovite Tsars, holding fast to the promise that no jot or tittle shall pass from the law till all be fulfilled. To all that is said about the requirements of modern life and modern science she turns a deaf ear. Partly from the predominance which she gives to the ceremonial element, partly from the fact that her chief aim is to preserve unmodified the doctrine and ceremonial as determined by the early Ecumenical Councils, and partly from the low state of general culture among the clergy, she has ever remained

outside of the intellectual movements. The attempts of the Roman Catholic Church to develop the traditional dogmas by definition and deduction, and the efforts of the Protestant Churches to reconcile their teaching with progressive science and the ever-varying intellectual currents of the time, are alike foreign to her nature. Hence she has produced no profound theological treatises conceived in a philosophical spirit, and has made no attempt to combat the spirit of infidelity in its modern forms. Profoundly convinced that her position is impregnable, she has "let the nations rave," and scarcely deigned to cast a glance at their intellectual and religious struggles. In a word, she is "in the world, but not of it."

If we wish to see represented in a visible form the peculiar characteristics of the Russian Church, we have only to glance at Russian religious art, and compare it with that of Western Europe. In the West, from the time of the Renaissance downwards, religious art has kept pace with the intellectual development. Gradually it emancipated itself from archaic forms and childish symbolism, converted the lifeless typical figures into living individuals, lit up their dull eyes and expressionless faces with human intelligence and human feeling, and finally affected archæological accuracy in costume and other details. Thus in the West the Icon grew into the *tableau de genre*, and the practised eye can at once decide to what period a religious picture belongs. In Russia, on the contrary, no such development has taken place in religious art. The old Byzantine forms have been

faithfully and rigorously preserved, and we can see reflected in the Icons — stiff, archaic, expressionless — the immobility of the Eastern Church in general, and of the Russian Church in particular.

To the Roman Catholic, who struggles against science as soon as it contradicts traditional conceptions, and to the Protestant, who strives to bring his religious beliefs into accordance with his scientific knowledge, the Russian Church may seem to resemble an antediluvian petrifaction, or a cumbrous line-of-battle ship that has been long stranded — "stuck on a bank, and beaten by the flood." It must be confessed, however, that the serene inactivity for which she is distinguished has had very valuable practical consequences. The Russian clergy have neither that haughty, aggressive intolerance which characterises their Roman Catholic brethren, nor that narrow-minded, bitter, uncharitable, sectarian spirit which is too often to be found among Protestants. They allow not only to heretics, but also to members of their own communion, the most complete intellectual freedom, and never think of anathematising any one for his scientific or unscientific opinions. All that they demand is that those who have been born within the pale of Orthodoxy should show the Church a certain nominal allegiance; and in this matter of allegiance they are by no means very exacting. So long as a member refrains from openly attacking the Church and from passing over to another confession, he may entirely neglect all religious ordinances and publicly pro-

fess scientific theories logically inconsistent with any kind of religious belief, without the slightest danger of incurring ecclesiastical censure. Until recently, it is true, all Orthodox Russians were obliged to communicate once a year, under pain of incurring various disagreeable consequences of a temporal nature; but this obligation proceeded in reality from the civil government, and the priests, in so far as they insisted on its fulfilment, were actuated by pecuniary rather than religious considerations. In short, if the Russian clergy has done little for the advancement of science and enlightenment, it has at least done nothing to suppress them; and that is, I fear, more than we can say of certain other priesthoods.

This apathetic tolerance may be partly explained by the national character, but it is at the same time to some extent due to the peculiar relations between Church and State. The Government vigilantly protects the Church from attack, and at the same time prevents her from attacking her enemies. Hence religious questions are never discussed in the press, and the ecclesiastical literature is all historical, homiletic, or devotional. The authorities allow public oral discussions to be held during Lent in the Kremlin of Moscow, between members of the State Church and Old Ritualists; but these debates are not theological in our sense of the term. They turn exclusively on details of Church History, and on the minutiæ of ceremonial observance. The disputants discuss, for instance, the proper position of

the fingers in making the sign of the cross, and found their arguments, not on Scripture, but on the ancient Icons, the decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, and the writings of the Greek Fathers.

Of late years there has been a good deal of vague talk about a possible union of the Russian and Anglican Churches. What the promoters of this scheme desire I do not profess to understand, but I wish to make one remark on the subject. If by "union" is meant simply union in the bonds of brotherly love, there can be, of course, no objection to any amount of such *pia desideria;* but if anything more real and practical is intended, I may warn simple-minded, well-meaning people that the project is an absurdity. It is much to be regretted that the bold spirits who conceive such projects, and the fluent orators who discourse upon them, do not take a little trouble to acquaint themselves with facts. If they devoted a few weeks to a calm, conscientious study of the past history and present condition of the Eastern Church in its various sections, they would come to understand that a union of the Russian and Anglican Churches would be as difficult of realisation and is as undesirable as a union of the Russian Council of State and the British House of Commons.[1]

[1] I suppose that the more serious partisans of the union scheme mean union with the Eastern Orthodox, and not with the Russian, Church. To them the above remarks are not addressed. Their scheme is in my opinion unrealisable and undesirable, but it contains nothing absurd.

CHAPTER III

AMONG THE HERETICS

THE Volga is not on the whole a strikingly picturesque river. The country on the left bank is flat and marshy, and the right bank, though high and occasionally steep, is tame in outline and monotonous in colour. On both banks there is an abundance of trees, but they do not group themselves as a landscape-painter would desire, and do not remove the prevailing impression of bareness. If you have been duly warned not to expect much in the way of scenery, you may think, during the first hour or two on board the steamer, that the panorama, though tame, is pretty and pleasing; but when you have gazed on it for an entire day you come to regard it as intensely monotonous, and take refuge in reading, card-playing, or some other amusement.

There are, however, a few points on the Volga which are interesting enough to make you lay down your book or your cards, and among these points the first place must be given to the Zhiguli Hills, lying about half-way between Kazán and Sarátof. They have a considerable local reputation, and I have heard a Frenchman enthusiastically describe them as "magnifiques." I do not think that an English-

man would venture to apply to them a stronger word than "pretty," but pretty they undoubtedly are. Though they are not high enough to obtain a place on ordinary maps, they are fine in form, and the left bank rises to do them honour, so that for a little time we have the sensation of passing through a hilly country. Then they gradually retreat from the river, and we see before us on the left bank a long straggling town, with one well-marked feature — a huge square church, with a bright green roof, surmounted by the ordinary pear-shaped cupolas. This is Samára, the chief town of the province or "Government" of that name.

Samára is a new town, a child of the present century, and recalls by its unfinished appearance the new towns of America. Most of the houses are of wood. The streets are still in such a primitive condition that after rain they are almost impassable from mud, and in dry, gusty weather they generate thick clouds of blinding, suffocating dust. Once during my stay there I witnessed a dust-hurricane, during which it was impossible at certain moments to see from the hotel window the houses on the other side of the street! Amidst such primitive surroundings the colossal new church seems a little out of keeping, and we involuntarily think, as we gaze at it, that some of the money expended on its construction might have been more profitably employed. But the Russians have their own ideas of the fitness of things. They are, in all that regards externals, extremely religious, and subscribe money liberally

for ecclesiastical purposes. Besides this, the Government considers that every chief town of a province should possess a cathedral.

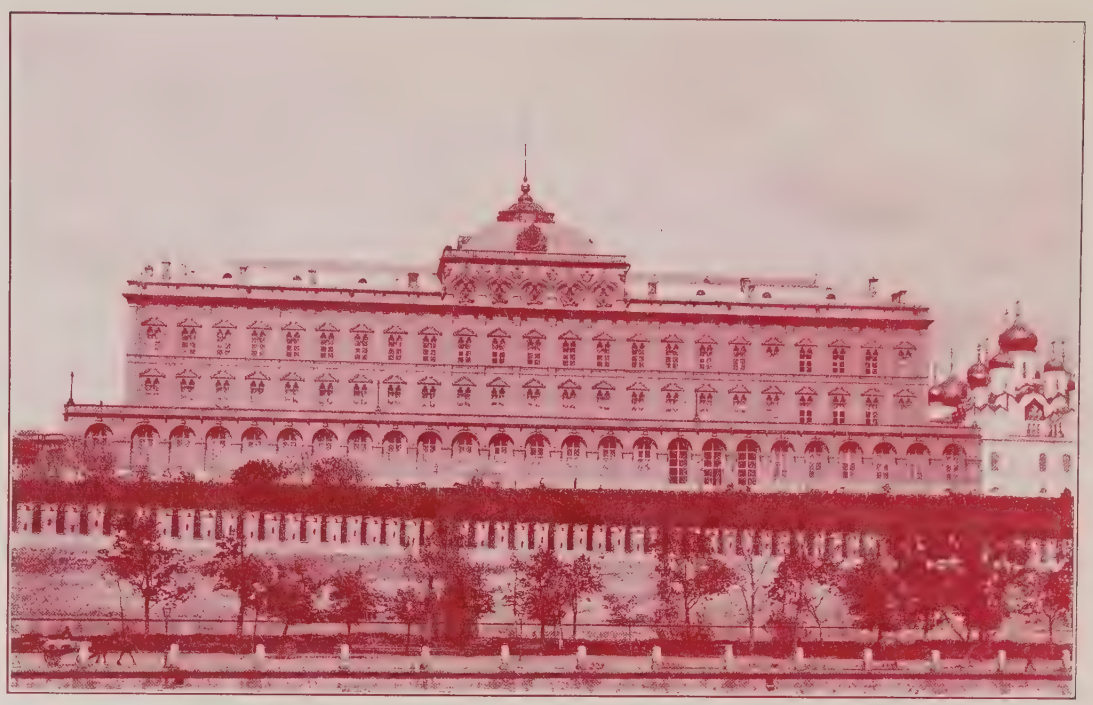
In its early days Samára was one of the outposts of Russian colonisation, and had often to take precautions against the raids of the nomadic tribes living in its vicinity; but the agricultural frontier has since been pushed far forward to the east and south, and the province is now one of the most productive in the Empire. The town is the chief market of this region, and therein lies its importance. The grain is brought in by the peasants from great distances, and stored in large granaries by the wholesale merchants, who send it thence to Moscow and St. Petersburg by water and by rail. In former days this was a very tedious operation. The boats containing the grain were towed by horses or stout peasants up the rivers and along the canals for hundreds of miles. Then came the period of "cabestans" — unwieldy machines propelled by means of anchors and a windlass. Now the transport is effected in a much more expeditious way. The grain is put on board of gigantic barges, which are towed up the river by powerful tug-steamers to some point connected with the great network of railways.

When the traveller has visited the cathedral and the granaries he has seen all the lions — not very formidable lions, truly — of the place. He may then visit the two "koomuiss" establishments pleasantly situated near the town. He will there find a considerable number of consumptive and other patients,

who drink enormous quantities of fermented mares'-milk (koomuiss), and who declare that they derive great benefit from this new health-restorer. When I had done all this I felt that I had fulfilled the whole duty of a tourist, and set myself to my regular work, which consisted in collecting information regarding the economic condition of the province, and especially the condition of the emancipated peasantry.

Whilst engaged in this occupation I heard a great deal about a peculiar religious sect called the Molokáni, and I felt interested in them because their religious belief, whatever it was, seemed to have a beneficial influence on their material welfare. Of the same race and placed in the same conditions as the Orthodox peasantry around them, they were undoubtedly better housed, better clad, more punctual in the payment of their taxes, and, in a word, more prosperous. All my informants agreed in describing them as quiet, decent, sober people; but regarding their religious doctrines the evidence was vague and contradictory. Some described them as Protestants or Lutherans, whilst others believed them to be the last remnants of a curious heretical sect which existed in the early Christian Church. One gentleman ventured to assure me that their doctrine was a modified form of Manichæism, but I did not put much confidence in his opinion, for I found by questioning him that he knew of Manichæism nothing but the name.

Desirous of obtaining clear notions on the subject, I determined to investigate the matter for myself.



THE KREMLIN FROM THE BRIDGE MASKAWENTZ, MOSCOW

At first I found this to be no easy task. I had little difficulty in making the acquaintance of a rich Molokán who lived in the town, and I so far gained his confidence that he promised me something that would serve as a letter of introduction to the leading members of the sect in the villages which I intended to visit; but on reflection he changed his mind, and failed to keep his promise. In the villages through which I passed I found numerous members of the sect, but they all showed a decided repugnance to speak about their religious beliefs. Long accustomed to extortion and persecution at the hands of the Administration, and suspecting me to be a secret agent of the Government, they carefully avoided speaking on any subject beyond the state of the weather and the prospects of the harvest, and replied to my questions on other topics as if they had been standing before a Grand Inquisitor.

A few unsuccessful attempts convinced me that it would be impossible to extract from them their religious beliefs by direct questioning. I adopted, therefore, a different line of policy. From meagre replies already received I had discovered that their doctrine had at least a superficial resemblance to Presbyterianism, and from former experience I was aware that the curiosity of intelligent Russian peasants is easily excited by descriptions of foreign countries. These two facts I took as the basis of my strategy. When I found a Molokán, or some one whom I suspected to be such, I talked for some time about the weather and the crops as if I had

no ulterior object in view. Having fully discussed this matter, I led the conversation gradually from the weather and crops in Russia to the weather and crops in Scotland, and then passed slowly from Scotch agriculture to the Scotch Presbyterian Church. On nearly every occasion this policy succeeded. When the peasant heard that there is a country where the people interpret the Scriptures for themselves, have no bishops, and consider the veneration of Icons as idolatry, he invariably listened with profound attention; and when he learned further that in that wonderful country the parishes annually send deputies to an assembly in which all matters pertaining to the Church are freely and publicly discussed, he almost always gave free expression to his astonishment, and I had to answer a whole volley of questions. "Where is that country?" "Is it to the east, or the west?" "Is it very far away?" "If our Presbyter could only hear all that!"

This last expression was precisely what I wanted, because it gave me an opportunity of making the acquaintance of the Presbyter or pastor without seeming to desire it; and I knew that a conversation with that personage, who is always an uneducated peasant like the others, but is generally more intelligent and better acquainted with religious doctrine, would certainly be of use to me. On more than one occasion I spent a great part of the night with a Presbyter, and thereby learned much concerning the religious beliefs and practices of the sect. After

these interviews I was sure to be treated with confidence and respect by all the Molokáns in the village, and recommended to the brethren of the faith in the neighbouring villages through which I intended to pass. Several of the more intelligent peasants with whom I spoke advised me strongly to visit Alexandrof-Haï, a village situated on the borders of the Kirghis Steppe. "We are dark (*i.e.*, ignorant) people here," they were wont to say, "and do not know anything, but in Alexandrof-Haï you will find those who know the faith, and they will discuss with you." This prediction was fulfilled in a somewhat unexpected way.

When returning some weeks later from a visit to the Kirghis of the Inner Horde, I arrived one evening at this centre of the Molokán faith, and was hospitably received by one of the brotherhood. In conversing casually with my host on religious subjects I expressed to him a desire to find some one well read in Holy Writ and well grounded in the faith, and he promised to do what he could for me in this respect. Next morning he kept his promise with a vengeance. Immediately after the tea-urn had been removed, the door of the room was opened, and twelve peasants were ushered in! After the customary salutations with these unexpected visitors, my host informed me to my astonishment that his friends had come to have a talk with me about the faith; and without further ceremony he placed before me a folio Bible in the Slavonic tongue, in order that I might read passages in support of my arguments.

As I was not at all prepared to open a formal theological discussion, I felt not a little embarrassed by this procedure, and I could see that my travelling companions, two Russian friends who cared for none of these things, were thoroughly enjoying my discomfiture. There was, however, no possibility of drawing back. I had asked for an opportunity of having a talk with some of the brethren, and now I had got it in a way that I certainly did not expect. My friends withdrew — "leaving me to my fate," as they whispered to me — and the "talk" began.

My fate was by no means so terrible as had been anticipated, but at first the situation was a little awkward. Neither party had any clear ideas as to what the other desired, and my visitors expected that I was to begin the proceedings. This expectation was quite natural and justifiable, for I had inadvertently invited them to meet me, but I could not make a speech to them, for the best of all reasons — that I did not know what to say. If I told them my real aims, their suspicions would probably be aroused. My usual stratagem of the weather and the crops was wholly inapplicable. For a moment I thought of proposing that a psalm should be sung as a means of breaking the ice, but I felt that this would give to the meeting a solemnity which I wished to avoid. On the whole it seemed best to begin at once a formal discussion. I told them, therefore, that I had spoken with many of their brethren in various villages, and that I had found what I considered grave errors of doctrine. I could not, for

instance, agree with them in their belief that it was unlawful to eat pork. This was perhaps an abrupt way of entering on the subject, but it furnished at least a *locus standi* — something to talk about — and an animated discussion immediately ensued. My opponents first endeavoured to prove their thesis from the New Testament, and when this argument broke down they had recourse to the Pentateuch. From a particular article of the ceremonial law we passed to the broader question as to how far the ceremonial law is still binding, and from this to other points equally important. If the logic of the peasants was not always unimpeachable, their knowledge of the Scriptures left nothing to be desired. In support of their views they quoted long passages from memory, and whenever I indicated vaguely any text which I needed, they at once supplied it verbatim, so that the big folio Bible served merely as an ornament. Three or four of them seemed to know the whole of the New Testament by heart. The course of our informal debate need not here be described; suffice it to say that, after four hours of uninterrupted conversation, we agreed to differ on questions of detail, and parted from each other without a trace of that ill-feeling which religious discussion commonly engenders. Never have I met men more honest and courteous in debate, more earnest in the search after truth, and more careless of dialectical triumphs than these simple, uneducated peasants. If at one or two points in the discussion a little undue warmth was displayed, I must

do my opponents the justice to say that they were not the offending party.

This long discussion, as well as numerous discussions which I had before and since with Presbyters and simple members in various parts of the country, confirmed my first impression that the doctrines of the Molokáni have a strong resemblance to Presbyterianism. There is, however, an important difference. Presbyterianism has an ecclesiastical organisation and a written creed, and its doctrines have long since become clearly defined by means of public discussion, polemical literature, and general assemblies. The Molokáni, on the contrary, have had no means of developing their fundamental principles and forming their vague religious beliefs into a clearly-defined logical system. Their theology is, therefore, still in a half-fluid state, so that it is impossible to predict what form it will ultimately assume. "We have not yet thought about that," I have frequently been told when I inquired about some abstruse doctrine; "we must talk about it at the meeting next Sunday. What is your opinion?" Besides this, their fundamental principles allow great latitude for individual and local differences of opinion. They hold that Holy Writ is the only rule of faith and conduct, but that it must be taken in the spiritual, and not in the literal, sense. As there is no terrestrial authority to which doubtful points can be referred, each individual is free to adopt the interpretation which commends itself to his own judgment. This will no doubt ultimately lead to a

variety of sects, and already there is a considerable diversity of opinion between different communities; but this diversity has not yet been recognised, and I may say that I nowhere found that fanatically dogmatic, quibbling spirit, which is the soul of sectarianism.

For their ecclesiastical organisation the Molokáni take as their model the early Apostolic Church, as depicted in the New Testament, and uncompromisingly reject all later authorities. In accordance with this model they have no hierarchy and no paid clergy, but choose from among themselves a Presbyter and two assistants — men well known among the brethren for their exemplary life and their knowledge of the Scriptures — whose duty it is to watch over the religious and moral welfare of the flock. On Sundays they hold meetings in private houses — they are not allowed to build churches — and spend two or three hours in psalm-singing, prayer, reading the Scriptures, and friendly conversation on religious subjects. If any one has a doctrinal difficulty which he desires to have cleared up, he states it to the congregation, and some of the others give their opinions, with the texts on which the opinions are founded. If the question seems clearly solved by the texts, it is decided; if not, it is left open.

As in many young sects, there exists among the Molokáni a system of severe moral supervision. If a member has been guilty of drunkenness or any act unbecoming a Christian, he is first admonished by the Presbyter in private or before the congregation;

and if this does not produce the desired effect, he is excluded for a longer or shorter period from the meetings and from all intercourse with the members. In extreme cases expulsion is resorted to. On the other hand, if any one of the members happens to be, from no fault of his own, in pecuniary difficulties, the others will assist him. This system of mutual control and mutual assistance has no doubt something to do with the fact that the Molokáni are always distinguished from the surrounding population by their sobriety, uprightness, and material prosperity.

Of the history and actual strength of the Molokán sect very little is known. Some believe that it was founded by foreign Protestants in the sixteenth century, but they can produce nothing better than vague traditions in support of their opinion. The oldest documentary evidence regarding it is, so far as I am aware, an official paper of the time of Catherine II. As to its actual strength it is difficult to form even a conjecture. Certainly it has many thousand members — probably several hundred thousands. Formerly the Government transported them from the central provinces to the thinly-populated outlying districts, where they had less opportunity of contaminating Orthodox neighbours; and accordingly we find them in the south-eastern districts of Samára, on the north coast of the Sea of Azof, in the Crimea, in the Caucasus, and in Siberia. There are still, however, very many of them in the central region, especially in the province of Tambóf.

The readiness with which the Molokáni modify their opinions and beliefs in accordance with what seems to them new light saves them effectually from bigotry and fanaticism, but it at the same time exposes them to evils of a different kind, from which they might be preserved by a few stubborn prejudices. "False prophets arise among us," said an old, sober-minded member to me on one occasion, "and lead many away from the faith." Of these false prophets the most remarkable in recent times was a man who called himself Ivan Grigorief, a mysterious personage, who had at one time a Turkish and at another an American passport, but who seemed in all other respects a genuine Russian. Some years ago he appeared at Alexandrof-Haï. Though he professed himself to be a good Molokán and was received as such, he enounced at the weekly meetings many new and startling ideas. At first he simply urged his hearers to live like the early Christians, and have all things in common. This seemed sound doctrine to the Molokáni, who profess to take the early Christians as their model, and some of them thought of at once abolishing personal property; but when the teacher intimated pretty plainly that this communism should include free love, a decided opposition arose, and it was objected that the early Church did not recommend wholesale adultery and cognate sins. This was a formidable objection, but "the prophet" was equal to the occasion. He reminded his friends that in accordance with their own doctrine the Scriptures should be

understood, not in the literal, but in the spiritual, sense — that Christianity had made men free, and every true Christian ought to use his freedom. "All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient" — that is to say, we ought to be guided in our acts simply by expediency, and all objections to a project on the ground of its being unlawful must fall to the ground. He who allows himself to be restrained by law is no true Christian.[1]

This account of the new doctrine was given to me by an intelligent Molokán, who had formerly been a peasant and was now a trader, as I sat one evening in his house in Novo-usensk, the chief town of the district in which Alexandrof-Haï is situated. It seemed to me that the author of this ingenious attempt to conciliate Christianity with extreme Utilitarianism must be an educated man in disguise. This conviction I communicated to my host, but he did not agree with me.

"No, I think not," he replied; "in fact, I am sure he is a peasant, and I strongly suspect he was at some time a soldier. He has not much learning, but he has a wonderful gift of talking. Never have I heard any one speak like him. He would have talked over the whole village, had it not been for an old man who was more than a match for him. And then he went to Orloff-Haï, and there he did talk the people over." What he really did in this latter place I never could clearly ascertain. Report said

[1] There is much in this description of the Molokáni that reminds one of the principles and practices of The Plymouth Brethren. — C. W.

that he founded a communistic association, of which he was himself president and treasurer, and converted the members to an extraordinary theory of prophetic succession, invented apparently for his own sensual gratification. For further information my host advised me to apply either to the prophet himself, who was at that time confined in the gaol on a charge of using a forged passport, or to one of his friends, a certain Mr. I——, who lived in the town. As it was a difficult matter to gain admittance to the prisoner, and I had little time at my disposal, I adopted the latter alternative.

Mr. I—— was himself a somewhat curious character. He had been a student in Moscow, and in consequence of some youthful indiscretions during the University disturbances, of which I have already spoken, had been exiled to this place. After waiting in vain some years for a release, he gave up the idea of entering one of the learned professions, married a peasant-girl, rented a piece of land, bought a pair of camels, and settled down as a small farmer.[1] He had a great deal to tell about the prophet.

Ivan Grigorief, it seemed, was really a simple Russian peasant, but he had been from his youth upwards one of those restless people who can never long work in harness. Where his native place was, and why he left it, he never divulged, for reasons best known to himself. He had travelled much, and had been an

[1] Here for the first time I saw camels used for agricultural purposes. When yoked to a small four-wheeled cart, the "ships of the desert" seemed decidedly out of place.

attentive observer. Whether he had ever been in America was doubtful, but he had certainly been in Turkey, and had fraternised with various Russian sectarians, who are to be found in considerable numbers near the Danube. Here, probably, he acquired many of his peculiar religious ideas, and conceived his grand scheme of founding a new religion — of rivalling the Founder of Christianity! He aimed at nothing less than this, as he on one occasion confessed, and he did not see why he should not be successful. He believed that the Founder of Christianity had been simply a man like himself, who understood better than others the people around him and the circumstances of the time, and he was convinced that he himself had these qualifications. One qualification, however, for becoming a prophet he certainly did not possess: he had no genuine religious enthusiasm in him — nothing of the martyr spirit about him. Much of his own preaching he did not himself believe, and he seemed to have a certain contempt for those who naïvely accepted it all. Not only was he cunning, but he knew he was cunning, and he was conscious that he was playing an assumed part. And yet perhaps it would be unjust to say that he was merely an impostor exclusively occupied with his own personal advantage. Though he was naturally a man of sensual tastes, and could not resist convenient opportunities of gratifying them, he seemed to believe that his communistic schemes would, if realised, be beneficial not only to himself, but also to the people.

Altogether a curious mixture of the prophet, the social reformer, and the cunning impostor! Whether he may ever again set up as prophet it is impossible to say, but certainly he has no chance of again succeeding among the Molokáni of the province of Samára.

Besides the Molokáni, there are in Russia many other heretical sects. Some of them are simply evangelical Protestants, like the "Stundisti," who have adopted the religious conceptions of their neighbours, the German colonists, whilst others are composed of wild enthusiasts, who give a loose rein to their excited imagination, and revel in what the Germans aptly term "der höhere Blödsinn." I cannot here attempt to convey even a general idea of these fantastic sects with their doctrinal and ceremonial absurdities, but I may offer the following classification of them for the benefit of those who may desire to study the subject:

1. Sects which take the Scriptures as the basis of their belief, but interpret and complete the doctrines therein contained by means of the occasional inspiration or internal enlightenment of their leading members.

2. Sects which pay little or no attention to Scripture, and derive their doctrine from the supposed inspiration of their living teachers.

3. Sects which believe in the reincarnation of Christ.

4. Sects which confound religion with nervous excitement, and are more or less erotic in their char-

acter. The excitement necessary for prophesying is commonly produced by dancing, jumping, pirouetting, or self-castigation, and the absurdities spoken at such times are regarded as the direct expression of divine wisdom. The religious exercises resemble more or less closely those of the "Dancing Dervishes," with which all who have visited Constantinople are familiar. There is, however, one important difference: the Dervishes practise their religious exercises in public, and consequently observe a certain decorum, whilst these Russian sects assemble in secret, and give free scope to their excitement, so that most disgusting orgies sometimes take place at their meetings. In one of the best known of these sects — the Skoptsi, or Eunuchs — fanaticism has led to physical mutilation.

To illustrate the general character of the sects belonging to this last category, I may quote here a short extract from a description of the "Khlysti" by one who was initiated into their mysteries: "Among them men and women alike take upon themselves the calling of teachers and prophets, and in this character they lead a strict, ascetic life, refrain from the most ordinary and innocent pleasures, exhaust themselves by long fasting and wild, ecstatic religious exercises, and abhor marriage. Under the excitement caused by their supposed holiness and inspiration, they call themselves not only teachers and prophets, but also 'Saviours,' 'Redeemers,' 'Christs,' 'Mothers of God.' Generally speaking, they call themselves simply Gods, and pray to each

other as to real Gods and living Christs or Madonnas. When several of these teachers come together at a meeting, they dispute with each other in a vain, boasting way as to which of them possesses most grace and power. In this rivalry they sometimes give each other lusty blows on the ear, and he who bears the blows most patiently, turning the other cheek to the assailant, acquires the reputation of having most holiness."

Another sect belonging to this category is the Jumpers, among whom the erotic element is disagreeably prominent. Here is a description of their religious meetings, which are held during summer in the forest, and during winter in some outlying house or barn: "After due preparation prayers are read by the chief teacher, dressed in a white robe and standing in the midst of the congregation. At first he reads in an ordinary tone of voice, and then passes gradually into a merry chant. When he remarks that the chanting has sufficiently acted on the hearers, he begins to jump. The hearers, singing likewise, follow his example. Their ever-increasing excitement finds expression in the highest possible jumps. This they continue as long as possible — men and women alike yelling like enraged savages. When all are thoroughly exhausted, the leader declares that he hears the angels singing" — and here begins a scene which cannot be here described. Indeed, it may be remarked in general that in many of the sects the erotic element plays such a prominent part that it is impossible to

describe their ceremonies in a work intended for the general public.

It is but fair to add that we know very little of these peculiar sects, and what we do know is furnished by professed enemies. It is very possible, therefore, that some of them are not nearly so absurd as they are commonly represented, and that many of the stories told are mere calumnies. Certain sects, for instance, are accused of killing children and using the blood of the victim for sacramental purposes; but this has never been satisfactorily proved, and we know that the same accusation was made by pagan writers against the early Christians. My own efforts to investigate in this field by personal observation were, I must confess, entirely fruitless.

The Government is very hostile to sectarianism, and occasionally endeavours to suppress it. This is natural enough as regards these fantastic sects, but it seems strange that the peaceful, industrious, honest Molokáni and Stundisti should be put under the ban. Why is it that a Russian peasant should be punished for holding doctrines which are openly professed with the sanction of the authorities by his neighbours, the German colonists?

To understand this the reader must know that according to Russian conceptions there are two distinct kinds of heresy, distinguished from each other, not by the doctrines held, but by the nationality of the holder. It seems to a Russian in the nature of things that Tartars should be Mahometans, that Poles should be Roman Catholics, and that Germans

should be Protestants; and the mere act of becoming a Russian subject is not supposed to lay the Tartar, the Pole, or the German under any obligation to change his faith. These nationalities are therefore allowed the most perfect freedom in the exercise of their respective religions, so long as they refrain from disturbing by propagandism the divinely-established order of things. This is the received theory, and we must do the Russians the justice to say that they habitually act up to it. If the Government has sometimes attempted to convert alien races, the motive has always been political, and the efforts have never awakened much sympathy among the people at large, or even among the clergy. In like manner the missionary societies which have sometimes been formed in imitation of the Western nations have never received much popular support. Thus with regard to aliens this peculiar theory has led to very extensive religious toleration. Tartars, Poles, and Germans are in a certain sense heretics, but their heresy is natural and justifiable. With regard to the Russians themselves the theory has had a very different effect. If in the nature of things the Tartar is a Mahometan, the Pole a Roman Catholic, and the German a Protestant, it is equally in the nature of things that the Russian should be a member of the Orthodox Church. On this point the written law and public opinion are in perfect accord. If an Orthodox Russian becomes a Roman Catholic or a Protestant, his heresy is not of the same kind as that of the Pole or the German.

No matter how pure and elevated his motives may be, his change of religion is not justifiable; on the contrary, he is amenable to the criminal law, and is at the same time condemned by public opinion as an apostate — almost as a traitor.

As to the future of these heretical sects it is impossible to speak with confidence. The more gross and fantastic will probably disappear as primary education spreads among the people, but the Protestant sects seem to possess much more vitality. For the present, at least, they are rapidly spreading. I have seen large villages where, according to the testimony of the inhabitants, there was not a single heretic fifteen years ago, and where now one-half of the population are Molokáni; and this change has taken place without any propagandist organisation. The civil and ecclesiastical authorities are well aware of the existence of the movement, but they are powerless to prevent it. The few efforts which they have made have been without effect, or worse than useless. Among the Stundisti corporal punishment has been tried as an antidote — without the concurrence, it is to be hoped, of the central authorities — and to the Molokáni of the province of Samára a learned monk was sent in the hope of converting them from their errors by reason and eloquence. What effect the birch-twigs had on the religious convictions of the Stundisti I have not been able to ascertain, but I assume that they were not very efficacious, for according to the latest accounts the numbers of the sect are increasing. Of

the mission in the province of Samára I happen to know more, and can state on the evidence of many peasants — some of them Orthodox — that the only immediate effect was to stir up religious fanaticism, and to induce a certain number of Orthodox to go over to the heretical camp. In the public discussions the disputants could find no common ground on which to argue, for the simple reason that their fundamental conceptions were different. The monk spoke of the Church as the terrestrial representative of Christ and the sole possessor of truth, whilst his opponents knew nothing of a Church in this sense, and held simply that all men should live in accordance with the dictates of Scripture. Once the monk consented to argue with them on their own ground, but on that occasion he sustained a signal defeat, for he could not produce a single passage recommending the veneration of Icons — a practice which the Russian peasants consider an essential part of Orthodoxy. After this he always insisted on the authority of the early Ecumenical Councils and the Fathers of the Church — an authority which his antagonists did not recognise. Altogether the mission was a complete failure, and all parties regretted that it had been undertaken. "It was a great mistake," remarked to me confidentially an Orthodox peasant — "a very great mistake! The Molokáni are a cunning people. The monk was no match for them; they knew the Scriptures a great deal better than he did. The Church should not condescend to discuss with heretics."

It is often said that these heretical sects are politically disaffected, and the Molokáni are thought to be specially dangerous in this respect. Perhaps there is a certain foundation for this opinion, for men are naturally disposed to doubt the legitimacy of a power that systematically persecutes them; but it may be confidently affirmed that any fanaticism of this kind which may have formerly existed has lost its significance now that active persecution is no longer in fashion. With regard to the Molokáni I believe the accusation to be a groundless calumny. Political ideas seem entirely foreign to their modes of thought. During my intercourse with them I have often heard them speak of the police as "wolves which have to be fed," but I have never heard them speak of the Emperor otherwise than in terms of filial affection and veneration.

CHAPTER IV

THE DISSENTERS

WE must be careful not to confound the heretical sects, Protestant and Fantastical, with the more numerous Dissenters or Schismatics, the descendants of those who seceded from the Russian Church — or more correctly from whom the Russian Church seceded — in the seventeenth century. So far from regarding themselves as heretics, these latter consider themselves more orthodox than the official Orthodox Church. They are conservatives, too, in the social as well as the religious sense of the term. Among them are to be found the last remnants of old Russian life, untinged by foreign influences.

The Russian Church has always paid inordinate attention to ceremonial observances and somewhat neglected the doctrinal and moral elements of the faith which it professes. This peculiarity greatly facilitated the spread of its influence among a people accustomed to pagan rites and magical incantations, but it had the pernicious effect of confirming in the new converts the superstitious belief in the virtue of mere ceremonies. Thus the Russians became zealous Christians in all matters of external observance

without knowing much about the spiritual meaning of the rites which they practised. They looked upon the rites and sacraments as mysterious charms which preserved them from evil influences in the present life and secured them eternal felicity in the life to come, and they believed that these charms would inevitably lose their efficacy if modified in the slightest degree. Extreme importance was therefore attached to the ritual minutiæ, and the slightest modification of these minutiæ assumed the importance of an historical event. In the year 1476, for instance, the Novgorodian Chronicler gravely relates: "This winter some philosophers (!) began to sing, 'O Lord, have mercy,' and others merely, 'Lord, have mercy.'" And this attaching of enormous importance to trifles was not confined to the ignorant multitude. An Archbishop of Novgorod declared solemnly that those who repeat the word "Alleluiah" only twice at certain points in the liturgy "sing to their own damnation;" and a celebrated Ecclesiastical Council, held in 1551, put such matters as the position of the fingers when making the sign of the cross on the same level as heresies — formally anathematising those who acted in such trifles contrary to its decisions.

This conservative spirit in religious concerns had a considerable influence on social life. As there was no clear line of demarcation between religious observances and simple traditional customs, the most ordinary act might receive a religious significance, and the slightest departure from a traditional custom

might be looked upon as a deadly sin. An old Russian would have resisted the attempt to deprive him of his beard as strenuously as a Calvinist of the present day would resist the attempt to make him abjure the doctrine of Predestination — and both for the same reason. As the doctrine of Predestination is for the Calvinist, so the wearing of a beard was for the old Russian — an essential of salvation. "Where," asked one of the Patriarchs of Moscow, "will those who shave their chins stand at the Last Day? — among the righteous adorned with beards or among the beardless heretics?" The question required of course no answer.

In the seventeenth century this superstitious, conservative spirit reached its climax. The civil wars and foreign invasions, accompanied by pillage, famine, and plagues with which that century opened, produced a wide-spread conviction that the end of all things was at hand. The mysterious number of the Beast was found to indicate the year 1666, and timid souls began to discover signs of that falling away from the Faith which is spoken of in the Apocalypse. The majority of the people did not perhaps share this notion, but they believed that the sufferings with which they had been visited were a Divine punishment for having forsaken the ancient customs. And it could not be denied that considerable changes had taken place. Orthodox Russia was now tainted with the presence of heretics. Foreigners who shaved their chins and smoked the accursed weed had been allowed to settle in Moscow,

and the Tsars not only held converse with them, but had even adopted some of their "pagan" practices. Besides this, the Government had introduced innovations and reforms, many of which were displeasing to the people. Thus the country was polluted with "heresy" — a subtle, evil influence lurking in everything foreign, and very dangerous to the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Faithful — something of the nature of an epidemic, but infinitely more dangerous, for disease kills merely the body, whereas "heresy" kills the soul, and causes both soul and body to be cast into hell-fire.

Had the Government continued to introduce the innovations slowly and cautiously, respecting as far as possible all outward forms, it might have effected much without producing a religious panic; but, instead of acting circumspectly as the occasion demanded, it ran full-tilt against the ancient prejudices and superstitious fears, and drove the people into open resistance. When the art of printing was introduced, it became necessary to choose the best texts of the Liturgy, Psalter, and other religious books, and on examination it was found that, through the ignorance and carelessness of copyists, numerous errors had crept into the manuscripts in use. This discovery led to further investigation, which showed that certain irregularities had likewise crept into the ceremonial. The chief of the clerical errors lay in the orthography of the word "Jesus," and the chief irregularity in the ceremonial regarded the position of the fingers when making the sign of the cross. In

order to correct these errors, the celebrated Nikon, who was then Patriarch, ordered all the old liturgical books and the old Icons to be called in, and new ones to be distributed; but the clergy and the people resisted. Believing these "Nikonian novelties" to be heretical, they clung to their old Icons, their old missals, and their old religious customs, as the sole anchors of safety which could save the Faithful from drifting to perdition. In vain the Patriarch assured the people that the change was a return to the ancient forms still preserved in Greece and Constantinople. "The Greek Church," it was replied, "is no longer free from heresy: Orthodoxy has become many-coloured from the violence of the Turkish Mahomet; and the Greeks, under the sons of Hagar, have fallen away from the ancient traditions." An anathema, formally pronounced by an Ecclesiastical Council against these Nonconformists, had no more effect than the admonitions of the Patriarch. They persevered in their obstinacy, and refused to believe that the blessed saints and holy martyrs who had used the ancient forms had not prayed and crossed themselves aright. "Not those holy men of old, but the present Patriarch and his counsellors must be heretics." "Woe to us! Woe to us!" cried the monks of Solovetsk when they received the new liturgies. "What have you done with the Son of God? Give Him back to us! You have changed Isus (the old Russian form of Jesus) into Iisus! It is fearful not only to commit such a sin, but even to think of it!" And the sturdy monks shut their gates, and defied

Patriarch, Council, and Tsar for seven long years, till the monastery was taken by an armed force.

The decree of excommunication pronounced by the Ecclesiastical Council placed the Nonconformists beyond the pale of the Church, and the civil power undertook the task of persecuting them. Persecution had of course merely the effect of confirming the victims in their belief that the Church and Tsar had become heretical. Thousands fled across the frontier and settled in the neighbouring countries — Poland, Prussia, Sweden, Austria, Turkey, the Caucasus, and Siberia. Others concealed themselves in the northern forests, and in the densely-wooded region near the Polish frontier, where they lived by agriculture or fishing, and prayed, crossed themselves, and buried their dead according to the customs of their forefathers. The northern forests were their favourite place of refuge. Hither flocked many of those who wished to keep themselves pure and undefiled. Here the more learned men among the Nonconformists — well acquainted with Holy Writ, with fragmentary translations from the Greek Fathers, and with the more important decisions of the early Ecumenical Councils — wrote polemical and edifying works for the confounding of heretics and the confirming of true believers. Hence were sent out in all directions zealous missionaries, in the guise of traders, pedlers, and labourers, to sow what they called the living seed, and what the official Church termed "Satan's tares." When the Government agents discovered these retreats, the inmates gener-

ally fled from the "ravenous wolves;" but on more than one occasion a large number of fanatical men and women, shutting themselves up, set fire to their houses, and voluntarily perished in the flames. In Paleostrofski Monastery, for instance, in the year 1687, no less than 2,700 fanatics gained the crown of martyrdom in this way; and many similar instances are on record.[1] As in all periods of religious panic, the Apocalypse was carefully studied, and the millennial ideas rapidly spread. The signs of the time were plain. Satan was being let loose for a little season. Men anxiously looked for the appearance of Antichrist — and Antichrist appeared!

The man in whom the people recognised the incarnate spirit of evil was no other than Peter the Great.

From the Nonconformist point of view, Peter had very strong claims to be considered Antichrist. He had none of the staid, pious demeanour of the old Tsars, and showed no respect for what was chiefly venerated by the people. He ate, drank, and habitually associated with heretics, spoke their language, wore their costume, chose from among them his most intimate friends, and favoured them more than his own people. Imagine the horror and commotion which would be produced among pious Catholics if the Pope should some day appear in the costume of the Grand Turk, and should choose Pashas as his chief counsellors! The horror which Peter's conduct

[1] A list of well-authenticated cases is given by Nilski, "Seméinaya zhizn v russkom Raskólê," St. Petersburg, 1869, part I., pp. 55–57. The number of these self-immolators certainly amounted to many thousands.

produced among a large section of his subjects was probably not less great. They could not explain it otherwise than by supposing him to be the Devil in disguise, and they saw in all his important measures convincing proofs of his Satanic origin. The newly-invented census, or "revision," was a profane "numbering of the people," and an attempt to enrol in the service of Beelzebub those whose names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life. The new title of Imperator was explained to mean something very diabolical. The passport bearing the Imperial arms was the seal of Antichrist. The order to shave the beard was an attempt to disfigure "the image of God," after which man had been created, and by which Christ would recognise His own at the Last Day. The change in the calendar, by which New Year's Day was transferred from September to January, was the destruction of "the years of our Lord," and the introduction of the years of Satan in their place. Of the ingenious arguments by which these theses were supported, I may quote one by way of illustration. The world, it was explained, could not have been created in January, as the new calendar seemed to indicate, because apples are not ripe at that season, and consequently Eve could not have been tempted in the way described!

These ideas regarding Peter and his reforms were strongly confirmed by the vigorous persecutions which took place during the earlier years of his reign. The Nonconformists were constantly convicted of political disaffection — especially of "insulting the

Imperial Majesty" — and were accordingly flogged, tortured, and beheaded without mercy. But when Peter had succeeded in putting down all armed opposition, and found that the movement was no longer dangerous for the throne, he adopted a policy more in accordance with his personal character. Whether he had himself any religious belief whatever, may be doubted; certainly he had not a spark of religious fanaticism in his nature. Exclusively occupied with secular concerns, he took no interest in subtle questions of religious ceremonial, and was profoundly indifferent as to how his subjects prayed and crossed themselves, provided they obeyed his orders in worldly matters and paid their taxes regularly. As soon, therefore, as political considerations admitted of clemency, he stopped the persecutions, and at last, in 1714, issued ukases to the effect that all Dissenters might live unmolested, provided they inscribed themselves in the official registers and paid a double poll-tax. Somewhat later they were allowed to practise freely all their old rites and customs, on condition of paying certain fines.

With the accession of Catherine II., "the friend of philosophers," the *Raskól*,[1] as the schism had come to be called, entered on a new phasis. Penetrated with the ideas of religious toleration then in fashion in Western Europe, Catherine abolished the disabilities to which the Raskólniks were subjected, and invited those of them who had fled across the frontier

[1] The term is derived from two Russian words — *ras*, asunder; and *kolot'*, to split.

to return to their homes. Thousands accepted this invitation, and many who had hitherto sought to conceal themselves from the eye of the Administration became rich and respected merchants. The peculiar, semi-monastic religious communities, which had up till that time existed only in the forests of the northern and western provinces, began to appear in Moscow, and were officially recognised by the Administration. At first they took the form of hospitals for the sick, or asylums for the aged and infirm, but soon they became regular monasteries, the superiors of which exercised an undefined spiritual authority not only over the inmates, but also over the members of the sect throughout the length and breadth of the Empire.

From that time down to the present the Government has followed a wavering policy, oscillating between complete tolerance and active persecution. It must, however, be said that the persecution has never been of a very searching kind. In persecution, as in all other manifestations, the Russian Church directs its attention chiefly to external forms. It never seeks to ferret out heresy in a man's opinions, but complacently accepts as Orthodox all who annually appear at confession and communion, and who refrain from acts of open hostility. Those who can make these concessions to convenience are practically free from molestation, and those who cannot thus trifle with their conscience have an equally convenient method of escaping persecution. The parish clergy, with their customary indifference to things

spiritual and their traditional habit of regarding their functions from the financial point of view, are hostile to sectarianism, chiefly because it diminishes their revenues by diminishing the number of parishioners requiring their ministrations. This cause of hostility can easily be removed by a certain pecuniary sacrifice on the part of the sectarians, and accordingly there generally exists between them and their parish priest a tacit contract, by which both parties are perfectly satisfied. The priest receives his income as if all his parishioners belonged to the State Church, and the parishioners are left in peace to believe and practise what they please. By this rude, convenient method, a very large amount of toleration is effectually secured. Whether the practice has a beneficial moral influence on the parish clergy is, of course, an entirely different question.

When the priest has been satisfied, there still remains the police, which likewise levies a tax on heterodoxy; but the negotiations are generally not difficult, for it is in the interest of both parties that they should come to terms and live in good-fellowship. Thus practically the Raskólniks live in the same condition as in the time of Peter: they pay a tax, and are not molested — only the money paid does not now find its way into the Imperial Exchequer.

These external changes in the history of the Raskól have exercised a powerful influence on its internal development.

When formally anathematised and excluded from the dominant Church, the Nonconformists had neither a definite organisation nor a positive creed. The only tie that bound them together was hostility to the "Nikonian novelties," and all they desired was to preserve intact the beliefs and customs of their forefathers. At first they never thought of creating any permanent organisation. The more moderate believed that the Tsar would soon re-establish Orthodoxy, and the more fanatical imagined that the end of all things was at hand. Some had coffins made, and lay down in them at night, in the expectation that the Second Advent might take place before the morning. In either case they had only to suffer for a little season, keeping themselves free from the taint of heresy and from all contact with the kingdom of Antichrist.

But years passed, and neither of these expectations was fulfilled. The fanatics awaited in vain the sound of the last trump and the appearance of Christ, coming with His angels to judge the world. The sun continued to rise, and the seasons followed each other in their accustomed courses, but the end was not yet. Nor did the civil power return to the old faith. Nikon fell a victim to Court intrigues and his own overweening pride, and was formally deposed. Tsar Alexis in the fulness of time was gathered unto his fathers. But there was no sign of a re-establishment of the old Orthodoxy. Gradually the leading Raskólniks perceived that they must make preparations, not for the Day of Judg-

CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION, MOSCOW

ment, but for a terrestrial future — that they must create some permanent form of ecclesiastical organisation. In this work they encountered at the very outset not only practical but also theoretical difficulties.

So long as they confined themselves to simply resisting the official innovations, they seemed to be unanimous; but when they were forced to abandon this negative policy and to determine theoretically their new position, radical differences of opinion became apparent. All were convinced that the Russian Church had become heretical, and that it had now Antichrist instead of Christ as its head; but it was not easy to determine what should be done by those who refused to bow the knee to the Son of Destruction. According to Protestant conceptions there was a very simple solution of the difficulty: the Nonconformists had simply to create a new Church for themselves, and worship God in the way that seemed good to them. But to the Russians of that time such notions were still more repulsive than the innovations of Nikon. These men were Orthodox to the back-bone — "plus royalistes que le roi" — and according to Orthodox conceptions the founding of a new Church is an absurdity. They believed that if the chain of historic continuity were once broken, the Church must necessarily cease to exist, in the same way as an ancient family becomes extinct when its sole representative dies without issue. If, therefore, the Church had already ceased to exist, there was no

longer any means of communication between Christ and His people, the sacraments were no longer efficacious, and mankind was for ever deprived of the ordinary means of grace.

Now on this important point there was a difference of opinion among the Dissenters. Some of them believed that, though the ecclesiastical authorities had become heretical, the Church still existed in the communion of those who had refused to accept the innovations. Others declared boldly that the Orthodox Church had ceased to exist, that the ancient means of grace had been withdrawn, and that those who had remained faithful must thenceforth seek salvation, not in the sacraments, but in prayer and such other religious exercises as did not require the co-operation of duly consecrated priests. Thus took place a schism among the Schismatics. The one party retained all the sacraments and ceremonial observances in the older form; the other refrained from the sacraments and from many of the ordinary rites, on the ground that there was no longer a real priesthood, and that consequently the sacraments could not be efficacious. The former party are termed Stáro-obriádtsi, or Old Ritualists; the latter are called Bezpopoftsi, that is to say, people "without priests" (*bez popóf*).

The succeeding history of these two sections of the Nonconformists has been widely different. The Old Ritualists, being simply ecclesiastical Conservatives desirous of resisting all innovations, have remained a compact body little troubled by differ-

ences of opinion. The Priestless People, on the contrary, ever seeking to discover some new effectual means of salvation, have fallen into an endless number of independent sects.

The Old Ritualists had, however, one theoretical difficulty, which has only been very recently removed. At first they had amongst themselves plenty of consecrated priests for the celebration of the ordinances, but they had no means of renewing the supply. They had no bishops, and according to Orthodox belief the lower degrees of the clergy cannot be created without episcopal consecration. At the time of the schism one bishop had thrown in his lot with the Schismatics, but he had died shortly afterwards without leaving a successor, and thereafter no bishop had joined their ranks. As time wore on, the necessity of episcopal consecration came to be more and more felt, and it is not a little interesting to observe how these rigorists, who held to the letter of the law and declared themselves ready to die for a jot or a tittle, modified their theory in accordance with the changing exigencies of their position. When the priests who had kept themselves "pure and undefiled" — free from all contact with Antichrist — became scarce, it was discovered that certain priests of the dominant Church might be accepted if they formally abjured the Nikonian novelties. At first, however, only those who had been *consecrated* previous to the supposed apostasy of the Church were accepted, for the very good reason that consecration by bishops who had become heretical could not be

efficacious. When these could no longer be obtained it was discovered that those who had been *baptised* previous to the apostasy might be accepted; and when even these could no longer be found, a still further concession was made to necessity, and *all* consecrated priests were received on condition of their solemnly abjuring their errors. Of such priests there was always an abundant supply. If a regular priest could not find a parish, or if he was deposed by the authorities for some crime or misdemeanour, he had merely to pass over to the Old Ritualists, and was sure to find among them a hearty welcome and a tolerable salary.

By these concessions the indefinite prolongation of Old Ritualism was secured, but many of the Old Ritualists could not but feel that their position was, to say the least, extremely anomalous. They had no bishops of their own, and their priests were all consecrated by bishops whom they believed to be heretical! For many years they hoped to escape from this dilemma by discovering "Orthodox"—that is to say, Old Ritualist — bishops somewhere in the East; but when the East had been searched in vain, and all their efforts to obtain native bishops proved fruitless, they conceived the design of creating a bishopric somewhere beyond the frontier, among the Old Ritualists who had in times of persecution fled to Prussia, Austria, and Turkey. There were, however, immense difficulties in the way. In the first place it was necessary to obtain the formal permission of some foreign Government; and in the

second place an Orthodox bishop must be found, willing to consecrate an Old Ritualist or to become an Old Ritualist himself. Again and again the attempt was made and failed; but at last, after years of effort and intrigue, the design was realised. In 1844 the Austrian Government gave permission to found a bishopric at Bêlaya Krinitsa, in Gallicia, a few miles from the Russian frontier; and two years later the deposed Metropolitan of Bosnia consented, after much hesitation, to pass over to the Old Ritualist confession and accept the diocese.[1] From that time the Old Ritualists have had their own bishops, and have not been obliged to accept the runaway priests of the dominant Church.

The Old Ritualists were naturally much grieved by the schism, and often sorely tried by persecution, but they have always enjoyed a certain spiritual tranquillity, proceeding from the conviction that they have preserved for themselves the means of salvation. The position of the more extreme section of the Schismatics was much more tragical. They believed that the sacraments had irretrievably lost their efficacy, and that the ordinary means of salvation were for ever withdrawn. They imagined that the powers of darkness had been let loose, that the authorities were the agents of Satan, and that the personage who filled the place of the old God-fearing Tsars was no other than Antichrist. Under the

[1] An interesting account of these negotiations, and a most curious picture of the Orthodox ecclesiastical world in Constantinople, is given by Subbótin, "Istoria Bêlokrinitskoi Ierarkhii," Moscow, 1874.

influence of these horrible ideas they fled to the woods and the caves to escape from the rage of the Beast, and to await the second coming of the Lord.

This state of things could not continue very long. Extreme religious fanaticism, like all other abnormal states, cannot long exist in a mass of human beings without some constant exciting cause. The vulgar necessities of everyday life, especially among people who have to live by the labour of their hands, have a wonderfully sobering influence on the excited brain, and must always, sooner or later, prove fatal to inordinate excitement. A few peculiarly constituted individuals may show themselves capable of a life-long enthusiasm, but the multitude is ever spasmodic in its fervour, and begins to slide back to its former apathy as soon as the exciting cause ceases to act. All this we find exemplified in the history of the "Priestless People." When it was found that the world did not come to an end, and that the rigorous system of persecution was relaxed, the less excitable natures returned to their homes, and resumed their old mode of life; and when Peter the Great made his politic concessions, many who had declared him to be Antichrist came to suspect that he was really not so black as he was painted. This idea struck deep root in a religious community near Lake Onega (Vuígovski Skit), which had received special privileges on condition of supplying labourers for the neighbouring mines; and here was developed a new theory which opened up a way of reconciliation with

the Government. By a more attentive study of Holy Writ and ancient books it was discovered that the reign of Antichrist would consist of two periods. In the former, the Son of Destruction would reign merely in the spiritual sense, and the Faithful would not be much molested; in the latter, he would reign visibly in the flesh, and true believers would be subjected to the most frightful persecution. The second period, it was held, had evidently not yet arrived, for the Faithful now enjoyed "a time of freedom and not of compulsion or oppression." Whether this theory is strictly in accordance with Apocalyptic prophecy and Patristic theology may be doubted, but it fully satisfied those who had already arrived at the conclusion by a different road, and who sought merely a means of justifying their position. Certain it is that very many accepted it, and determined to render unto Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's, or, in secular language, to pray for the Tsar and to pay their taxes.

This ingenious compromise was not accepted by all the Priestless People. On the contrary, many of them regarded it as a woful backsliding — a new device of the Evil One; and among these irreconcilables was a certain peasant called Theodosi, a man of little education, but of remarkable intellectual power and unusual strength of character. He raised anew the old fanaticism by his preaching and writings — widely circulated in manuscript — and succeeded in founding a new sect in the forest region near the Polish frontier.

The Priestless Nonconformists thus fell into two sections; the one, called Pomórtsi,[1] accepted at least a partial reconciliation with the civil power; the other, called Theodosians, after their founder, held to the old opinions, and refused to regard the Tsar otherwise than as Antichrist.

These latter were at first very wild in their fanaticism, but ere long they gave way to the influences which had softened the fanaticism of the Pomórtsi. Under the liberal, conciliatory rule of Catherine they lived in contentment, and many of them enriched themselves by trade. Their fanatical zeal and exclusiveness evaporated under the influence of material well-being and constant contact with other classes, especially after they were allowed to build a monastery in Moscow. The Superior of this monastery, a man of much shrewdness and enormous wealth, succeeded in gaining the favour not only of the lower officials, who could be easily bought, but even of high-placed dignitaries, and for many years he exercised a very real, if undefined, authority over all sections of the Priestless People. "His fame," it is said, "sounded throughout Moscow, and the echoes were heard in Petropol (St. Petersburg), Riga, Astrakhan, Nizhni-Nóvgorod, and other lands of piety;" and when deputies came to consult him, they prostrated themselves in his presence, as before the great ones of the earth. Living thus not only in

[1] The word Pomórtsi means "those who live near the sea-shore." It is commonly applied to the inhabitants of the Northern provinces — that is, those who live near the White Sea.

peace and plenty, but even in honour and luxury, "the proud Patriarch of the Theodosian Church" could not consistently fulminate against "the ravenous wolves," with whom he lived on friendly terms, or excite the fanaticism of his followers by highly-coloured descriptions of "the awful sufferings and persecution of God's people in these latter days," as the founder of the sect had been wont to do. Though he could not openly abandon any fundamental doctrines, he allowed the ideas about the reign of Antichrist to fall into the background, and taught by example, if not by precept, that the Faithful might, by prudent concessions, live very comfortably in this present evil world. This seed fell upon soil already prepared for its reception. The Faithful gradually forgot their old savage fanaticism, and have since contrived, while holding many of their old ideas in theory, to accommodate themselves in practice to the existing order of things.

The gradual softening and toning down of the original fanaticism in these two sects are strikingly exemplified in their ideas of marriage, which underwent, like their conceptions of Antichrist, profound modifications. According to Orthodox doctrine, marriage is a sacrament which can only be performed by a consecrated priest, and consequently for the Priestless People the celebration of marriage was an impossibility. In the first ages of Sectarianism celibacy was quite in accordance with their surroundings. Living in constant fear of their persecutors, and wandering from one place of refuge to another,

the sufferers for the faith had little time or inclination to think of family ties, and readily listened to the monks, who exhorted them to mortify the lusts of the flesh. If we remember that the Russian people, even under ordinary circumstances, regard celibacy as an essential attribute of the higher Christian life, we may easily imagine their sentiments regarding marriage in a time of persecution, when the second coming of the Lord was daily and hourly expected. Even after the religious panic had subsided, all the Priestless communities continued to hold that marriage was merely sinful concubinage, and that celibacy was incumbent on all true believers. The result, however, proved that celibacy in the creed by no means ensures chastity in life. Not only in the villages of the Dissenters, but even in those religious communities which professed a more ascetic mode of life, a numerous class of "orphans" began to appear, who knew not who their parents were; and this ignorance of blood-relationship naturally led to incestuous connections. Besides this, the doctrine of celibacy had grave practical inconveniences, for the peasant requires a housewife to attend to domestic concerns and to help him in his agricultural occupations. Thus the necessity of re-establishing family life came to be felt, and the feeling soon found expression in a doctrinal form both among the Pomórtsi and among the Theodosians. Learned dissertations were written and disseminated in manuscript copies, violent discussions took place, and at last a great Council was held in Moscow to discuss the

question.[1] The point at issue was never unanimously decided, but many accepted the ingenious arguments in favour of matrimony, and contracted marriages which were, of course, null and void in the eye of the law and of the Church, but perfectly valid in all other respects. Had the Government fostered this movement by giving a legal validity to these marriages, it would have closed one of the chief fountains of sectarian fanaticism; unfortunately, it long listened to the suggestions of the ecclesiastics, who could admit of no compromise in sacramental matters, and it is only within the last few years that important concessions on this point have been made.

This new backsliding of the unstable multitude produced a new outburst of fanaticism among the stubborn few. Some of those who had hitherto sought to conceal the origin of the "orphan" class above referred to now boldly asserted that the existence of this class was a religious necessity, because in order to be saved men must repent, and in order to repent men must sin! At the same time the old ideas about Antichrist were revived and preached with fervour by a peasant called Philip, who founded a new sect called the Philipists. This sect still exists. They hold fast to the old belief that the Tsar is Antichrist, and that the civil and ecclesiastical authorities are the servants of Satan — an idea that was kept

[1] I cannot here enter into the details of this remarkable controversy, but I may say that in studying it I have been frequently astonished by the dialectical power and logical subtlety displayed by the disputants. Some of the treatises, written by simple peasants, might bear comparison with the ingenious dissertations of the mediæval Schoolmen.

alive by the corruption and extortion for which the Administration were, until very recently, notorious. They do not venture on open resistance to the authorities, but the bolder members take little pains to conceal their opinions and sentiments, and may be easily recognised by their severe aspect, their Puritanical manner, and their Pharisaical horror of everything which they suppose heretical and unclean. Some of them, it is said, carry this fastidiousness to such an extent that they take off and throw away the handle of a door if it has been touched by a heretic!

It may seem that we have here reached the extreme limits of fanaticism, but in reality there were men whom even the Pharisaical Puritanism of the Philipists did not satisfy. These new zealots, who appeared in the time of Catherine II., but first became known to the official world in the reign of Nicholas, rebuked the lukewarmness of their brethren, and founded a new sect in order to preserve intact the asceticism practised immediately after the schism. The sect still exists. They call themselves "Christ's People" (Christóviye Lyúdi), but are better known under the popular names of "Wanderers" (Stránniki), or "Fugitives" (Beguný). Of all the sects they are the most hostile to the existing political and social organisation. Not content with condemning the military conscription, the payment of taxes, the acceptance of passports, and everything connected with the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, they consider it sinful to live peaceably among

an Orthodox — that is, according to their belief, a heretical — population, and to have dealings with any who do not share their extreme views. Holding the Antichrist doctrine in its extreme form, they declare that Tsars are the vessels of Satan, that the Established Church is the dwelling-place of the Father of Lies, and that all who submit to the authorities are children of the Devil. According to this creed, those who wish to escape from the wrath to come must have neither houses nor fixed places of abode, must sever all ties that bind them to the world, and must wander about continually from place to place. True Christians are but strangers and pilgrims in the present life, and whoso binds himself to the world will perish with the world.

Such is the theory of these Wanderers, but among them, as among the less fanatical sects, practical necessities have produced concessions and compromises. As it is impossible to lead a nomadic life in Russian forests, the Wanderers have been compelled to admit into their ranks what may be called lay-brethren — men who nominally belong to the sect, but who live like ordinary mortals and have some rational way of gaining a livelihood. These latter live in the villages or towns, support themselves by agriculture or trade, accept passports from the authorities, pay their taxes regularly, and conduct themselves in all outward respects like loyal subjects. Their chief religious duty consists in giving food and shelter to their more zealous brethren, who have adopted a vagabond life in practice as well as in

theory. It is only when they feel death approaching that they consider it necessary to separate themselves from the heretical world, and they effect this by having themselves carried out to some neighbouring wood — or into a garden if there is no wood at hand — where they may die in the open air.

Thus, we see, there is among the Russian Nonconformist sects what may be called a gradation of fanaticism, in which is reflected the history of the Great Schism of the seventeenth century. In the Wanderers we have the representatives of those who adopted and preserved the Antichrist doctrine in its extreme form — the successors of those who fled to the forests to escape from the rage of the Beast and to await the second coming of Christ. In the Philipists we have the representatives of those who adopted these ideas in a somewhat softer form, and who came to recognise the necessity of having some regular means of subsistence until the last trump should be heard. The Theodosians represent those who were in theory at one with the preceding category, but who, having less religious fanaticism, considered it necessary to yield to force and make peace with the Government without sacrificing their convictions. In the Pomórtsi we see those who preserved only the religious ideas of the schism, and became reconciled with the civil power. Lastly we have the Old Ritualists, who differed from all the other sects in retaining the old ordinances, and who simply rejected the spiritual authority of the dominant Church. Besides these chief sections of the Nonconformists

there are a great many minor denominations (*tólki*), differing from each other on minor points of doctrine. In certain districts, it is said, nearly every village has one or two independent sects. This is especially the case among the Don Cossacks and the Cossacks of the Ural, who are in great part descendants of the men who fled from the early persecutions.

Of all the sects the Old Ritualists stand nearest to the official Church. They hold the same dogmas, practise the same rites, and differ only in trifling ceremonial matters, which few people consider essential. In the hope of inducing them to return to the official fold the Government created at the beginning of the present century special churches, in which they were allowed to retain their ceremonial peculiarities on condition of accepting regularly-consecrated priests and submitting to ecclesiastical jurisdiction. As yet the design has not met with much success. The great majority of the Old Ritualists regard it as a trap, and assert that the Church in making this concession has been guilty of self-contradiction. "The Ecclesiastical Council of Moscow," they say, "anathematised our forefathers for holding to the old ritual, and declared that the whole course of nature would be changed sooner than the curse be withdrawn. The course of nature has not been changed, but the anathema has been cancelled." This argument ought to have a certain weight with those who believe in the infallibility of Ecclesiastical Councils.

Towards the Priestless People the Government has always acted in a much less conciliatory spirit. Its

severity has been sometimes justified on the ground that Sectarianism has had a political as well as a religious significance. A State like Russia cannot overlook the existence of sects which preach the duty of systematic resistance to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities and hold doctrines which lead to the grossest immorality. This argument, it must be admitted, is not without a certain force, but it seems to me that the policy adopted tended to increase rather than diminish the evils which it sought to cure. Instead of dispelling the absurd idea that the Tsar was Antichrist by a system of strict and even-handed justice, punishing merely actual crimes and delinquencies, the Government confirmed the notion in the minds of thousands by persecuting those who had committed no crime and who desired merely to worship God according to their conscience. Above all it erred in preventing and punishing those marriages which, though legally irregular, were the best possible means of diminishing fanaticism, by leading back the fanatics to healthy social life. Fortunately these errors have now been abandoned. Since the accession of the present Emperor a policy of clemency and conciliation has been adopted, and has proved much more efficacious than the former system of persecution. The Dissenters have not returned to the official fold, but they have lost much of their old fanaticism and exclusiveness.

In respect of numbers the Sectarians compose a very formidable body. Of Old Ritualists and Priestless People there are, it is said, no less than seven

millions; and the Protestant and Fantastical sects comprise probably about three millions more. If these numbers be correct, the Sectarians constitute about an eighth of the whole population of the Empire. They count in their ranks none of the nobles — none of the so-called enlightened class — but they include in their number the third and wealthiest part of the merchant class, the majority of the Don Cossacks, and all the Cossacks of the Ural.

Under these circumstances it is important to know how far the Sectarians are politically disaffected. Some people imagine that in the event of an insurrection or a foreign invasion they might rise against the Government, whilst others believe that this supposed danger is purely imaginary. For my own part I agree with the latter opinion, which is strongly supported by the history of many important events, such as the French invasion in 1812, the Crimean War, and the last Polish insurrection. The great majority of the Schismatics and heretics are, I believe, loyal subjects of the Tsar. The more violent sects, which are alone capable of active hostility against the authorities, are weak in numbers, and regard all outsiders with such profound mistrust that they are wholly impervious to inflammatory influences from without. Even if all the sects were capable of active hostility, they would not be nearly so formidable as their numbers seem to indicate, for they are hostile to each other, and are wholly incapable of combining for a common purpose.

Though Sectarianism is thus by no means a seri-

ous political danger, it has nevertheless a considerable political significance. It proves satisfactorily that the Russian people is by no means so docile and pliable as is commonly supposed, and that it is capable of showing a stubborn, passive resistance to authority when it believes great interests to be at stake. The dogged energy which it has displayed in asserting for centuries its religious liberty may perhaps some day be employed in the arena of secular politics.[1]

[1] Regarding the Raskól some able articles have been published recently by Mr. Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, in the "Revue des Deux Mondes." English readers who desire to know more on the subject should consult the Appendix to "Select Sermons by Philaret, late Metropolitan of Moscow," London, Masters, 1870. This latter work, published anonymously, is from the pen of a very distinguished Russian lady, and may be recommended to all who take an interest in the Russian Church. The spirit of "ceremonialism" which produced the Raskól, and unfortunately still exists, has been well described and boldly denounced by Mr. Beliústin — himself a parish priest, but less enamoured of routine and more courageous than his fellows.

CHAPTER V

THE PASTORAL TRIBES OF THE STEPPE

AFTER living some time with the Molokáni in the southern part of the province of Samára, I struck eastward with the intention of visiting the Bashkirs, a Tartar tribe which still preserved — so at least I was assured — its old nomadic habits. My reasons for undertaking this journey were twofold. In the first place I was desirous of seeing with my own eyes some remnants of those terrible nomadic tribes which had at one time conquered Russia and long threatened to over-run Europe — those Tartar Hordes which gained, by their irresistible force and relentless cruelty, the reputation of being "the scourge of God." Besides this, I had long wished to study the conditions of pastoral life, and congratulated myself on having found a convenient opportunity of doing so.

As I proceeded eastwards I noticed a change in the appearance of the villages. The ordinary wooden houses, with their high sloping roofs, gradually gave place to flat-roofed huts, built of a peculiar kind of unburnt bricks, composed of mud and straw. I noticed, too, that the population became less and less dense, and the amount of fallow-land proportion-

ately greater. The peasants were evidently richer than those near the Volga, but they complained — as the Russian peasant always does — that they had not land enough. In answer to my inquiries why they did not use the thousands of acres that were lying fallow around them, they explained that they had already raised crops on that land for several successive years, and that consequently they must now allow it to "rest."

In one of the villages through which I passed I met with a very characteristic little incident. The village was called Samovólnaya Ivánofka, that is to say, "Ivánofka the Self-willed" or "the Non-authorised." Whilst our horses were being changed my travelling companion, in the course of conversation with a group of peasants, inquired about the origin of this extraordinary name, and discovered a curious bit of local history. The founders of the village had settled on the land without the permission of the owner, and obstinately resisted all attempts at eviction. Again and again troops had been sent to drive them away, but as soon as the troops retired these "self-willed" people returned and resumed possession, till at last the proprietor, who lived in St. Petersburg or some other distant place, became weary of the contest and allowed them to remain. The various incidents were related with much circumstantial detail, so that the narration lasted perhaps half an hour. All this time I listened attentively, and when the story was finished I took out my note-book in order to jot down the facts,

and asked in what year the affair had happened. No answer was given to my question. The peasants merely looked at each other in a significant way and kept silence. Thinking that my question had not been understood, I asked it a second time, repeating a part of what had been related. To my astonishment and utter discomfiture they all declared that they had never related anything of the sort! In despair I appealed to my friend and asked him whether my ears had deceived me — whether I was labouring under some strange hallucination. Without giving me any reply he simply smiled and turned away.

When we had left the village and were driving along in our tarantass the mystery was satisfactorily cleared up. My friend explained to me that I had not at all misunderstood what had been related, but that my abrupt question and the sight of my notebook had suddenly aroused the peasants' suspicions, and cut short their communicativeness. "They evidently suspected," he continued, "that you were a Tchinóvnik, and that you wished to use to their detriment the knowledge you had acquired. They thought it safer, therefore, at once to deny it all. You don't yet understand the Russian *muzhík!*"

In this last remark I was obliged to concur, but since that time I have come to know the *muzhík* better, and an incident of the kind would now no longer surprise me. From a long series of observations I have come to the conclusion that the great majority of the Russian peasants, when dealing with

the authorities, consider the most patent and barefaced falsehoods as a fair means of self-defence. Thus, for example, when a *muzhík* is implicated in a criminal affair, and a preliminary investigation is being made, he probably begins by constructing an elaborate story to explain the facts and exculpate himself. The story may be a tissue of self-evident falsehoods from beginning to end, but he defends it valiantly as long as possible. When he perceives that the position which he has taken up is utterly untenable, he declares openly that all he has said is false, and that he wishes to make a new declaration. This second declaration may have the same fate as the former one, and then he proposes a third. Thus groping his way, he tries various stories till he finds one that seems proof against all objections. In the fact of his thus telling lies there is of course nothing remarkable, for criminals in all parts of the world have a tendency to deviate from the truth when they fall into the hands of justice. The peculiarity is that he retracts his statements with the composed air of a chess-player who requests his opponent to let him take back an inadvertent move. Under the old system of procedure, which was abolished about ten years ago, clever criminals often contrived, by means of this simple device, to have their trial postponed for many years.

Such incidents naturally astonish a foreigner, and he is apt, in consequence, to pass a very severe judgment on the Russian peasantry in general. The reader may remember Karl Karl'itch's remarks on

the subject. These remarks I have heard repeated in various forms by Germans in all parts of the country, and there must be a certain amount of truth in them, for even an eminent Slavophil once publicly admitted that the peasant is prone to perjury. It is necessary, however, as it seems to me, to draw a distinction. In the ordinary intercourse of peasants among themselves, or with people in whom they have confidence, I do not believe that the habit of lying is abnormally developed. It is only when the peasant comes in contact with authorities that he shows himself an expert fabricator of falsehoods. In this there is nothing that need surprise us. For ages the peasantry were exposed to the arbitrary power and ruthless exactions of those who were placed over them; and as the law gave them no means of legally protecting themselves, their only means of self-defence lay in cunning and deceit.

We have here, I believe, the true explanation of that "Oriental mendacity," about which Eastern travellers have written so much. It is simply the result of a lawless state of society. Suppose a truth-loving Englishman falls into the hands of brigands or savages. Will he not, if he have merely an ordinary moral character, consider himself justified in inventing a few falsehoods in order to effect his escape? If so, we have no right to condemn very severely the hereditary mendacity of those races which have lived for many generations in a position analogous to that of the supposed Englishman

among brigands. When legitimate interests cannot be protected by truthfulness and honesty, prudent people always learn to employ means which experience has proved to be more effectual. In a country where the law does not afford protection, the strong man defends himself by his strength, the weak by cunning and duplicity. This fully explains the fact — if fact it be — that in Turkey the Christians are less truthful than the Mahometans.

But we have wandered a long way from the road to Bashkiria. Let us therefore return at once.

Of all the journeys which I made in Russia this was one of the most agreeable. The weather was bright and warm, without being unpleasantly hot; the roads were tolerably smooth; the tarantass, which had been hired for the whole journey, was nearly as comfortable as a tarantass can be; good milk, eggs, and white bread could be obtained in abundance; there was not much difficulty in procuring horses in the villages through which we passed, and the owners of them were not very extortionate in their demands. But what most contributed to my comfort was that I was accompanied by an agreeable, intelligent young Russian, who kindly undertook to make all the necessary arrangements, and I was thereby freed from those annoyances and worries which are always encountered in primitive countries where travelling is not yet a recognised institution. To him I left the entire control of our movements, passively acquiescing in everything, and asking no questions as to what was coming.

Taking advantage of my passivity, he prepared for me one evening a pleasant little surprise.

About sunset we had left a village called Morsha, and shortly afterwards, feeling drowsy, and being warned by my companion that we should have a long uninteresting drive, I had lain down in the tarantass and gone to sleep. On awaking I found that the tarantass had stopped, and that the stars were shining brightly overhead. A big dog was barking furiously close at hand, and I heard the voice of the Yemstchik informing us that we had arrived. I at once sat up and looked about me, expecting to see a village of some kind, but instead of that I perceived a wide open space, and at a short distance a group of haystacks. Close to the tarantass stood two figures in long cloaks, armed with big sticks, and speaking to each other in an unknown tongue. My first idea was that we had been somehow led into a trap, so I drew my revolver in order to be ready for all emergencies. My companion was still snoring loudly by my side, and stoutly resisted all my efforts to awake him.

"What's this?" I said, in a gruff, angry voice, to the Yemstchik. "Where have you taken us to?"

"To where I was ordered, master!"

For the purpose of getting a more satisfactory explanation I took to shaking my sleepy companion, but before he had returned to consciousness the moon shone out brightly from behind a thick bank of clouds, and cleared up the mystery. The supposed haystacks turned out to be tents. The two figures

with long sticks, whom I had suspected of being brigands, were peaceable shepherds, dressed in the ordinary Oriental khalát, and tending their sheep, which were grazing beside them. Instead of being in an empty hay-field, as I had imagined, we had before us a regular Tartar *Aoul*, such as I had often read about. For a moment I felt astonished and bewildered. It seemed to me that I had fallen asleep in Europe and awoke in Asia!

In a few minutes we were comfortably installed in one of the tents, a circular, cupola-shaped erection, of about twelve feet in diameter, composed of a framework of light wooden rods covered with thick felt. It contained no furniture, except a goodly quantity of carpets and pillows, which had been formed into a bed for our accommodation. Our amiable host, who was evidently somewhat astonished at our unexpected visit, but refrained from asking questions, soon bade us good-night and retired. We were not, however, left alone. A large number of black beetles remained and gave us a welcome in their own peculiar fashion. Whether they were provided with wings, or made up for the want of flying appliances by crawling up the sides of the tent and dropping down on any object they wished to reach, I did not discover, but certain it is that they somehow reached our heads — even when we were standing upright — and clung to our hair with wonderful tenacity. Why they should show such a marked preference for human hair we could not conjecture, till it occurred to us that the natives

habitually shaved their heads, and that these beetles must naturally consider a hair-covered cranium a curious novelty deserving of careful examination. Like all children of nature they were decidedly indiscreet and troublesome in their curiosity, but when the light was extinguished they took the hint and departed.

When we awoke next morning it was broad daylight, and we found a crowd of natives in front of the tent. Our arrival was evidently regarded as an important event, and all the inhabitants of the aoul were anxious to make our acquaintance. First our host came forward. He was a short, slimly-built man, of middle age, with a grave, severe expression, indicating an unsociable disposition. We afterwards learned that he was an Okhoon — that is to say, a minor officer of the Mahometan ecclesiastical administration, and at the same time a small trader in silken and woollen stuffs. With him came the Mullah, or priest, a portly old gentleman with an open honest face of the European type, and a fine grey beard. The other important members of the little community followed. They were all swarthy in colour, and had the small eyes and prominent cheek-bones which are characteristic of the Tartar races, but they had little of that flatness of countenance and peculiar ugliness which distinguish the pure Mongol. All of them, with the exception of the Mullah, spoke a little Russian, and used it to assure us that we were welcome. The children remained respectfully in the background, and the

women with veiled faces eyed us furtively from the doors of the tents.

The aoul consisted of about twenty tents, all constructed on the same model, and scattered about in sporadic fashion without the least regard to symmetry. Close by was a water-course, which appears in some maps as a river, under the name of Karalýk, but which was at that time merely a succession of pools containing a dark-coloured liquid. As we more than suspected that these pools supplied the inhabitants with water for culinary purposes, the sight was not calculated to whet our appetites. We turned away therefore hurriedly, and for want of something better to do we watched the preparations for dinner. These were decidedly primitive. A sheep was brought near the door of our tent, and there killed, skinned, cut up into pieces, and put into an immense pot, under which a fire had been kindled.

The dinner itself was not less primitive than the method of preparing it. The table consisted of a large napkin spread in the middle of the tent, and the chairs were represented by cushions, on which we sat cross-legged. There were no plates, knives, forks, spoons, or chop-sticks. Guests were expected all to eat out of a common wooden bowl, and to use the instruments with which nature had provided them. The service was performed by the host and his son. The fare was copious, but not varied — consisting entirely of boiled mutton, without bread or other substitute, and a little salted horse-flesh thrown in as an *entrée*.

To eat out of the same dish with half a dozen Mahometans, who accept their Prophet's injunction about ablutions in a highly figurative sense, and who are totally unacquainted with the use of forks and spoons, is not an agreeable operation, even if one is not much troubled with religious prejudices; but with these Bashkirs, something worse than this has to be encountered, for their favourite method of expressing their esteem and affection for one with whom they are eating consists in putting bits of mutton, and sometimes even handfuls of hashed meat, into his mouth! When I discovered this unexpected peculiarity in Bashkir manners and customs, I almost regretted that I had made a favourable impression upon my new acquaintances.

When the sheep had been devoured, partly by the company in the tent and partly by a nondescript company outside — for the whole aoul took part in the festivities — koomuiss was served in unlimited quantities. This beverage, as I have already explained, is mare's milk fermented; but what here passed under the name was very different from the koomuiss I had tasted in the *établissements* of Samára. There it was a pleasant, effervescing drink, with only the slightest tinge of acidity; here it was a "still" liquid, strongly resembling very thin and very sour buttermilk. My Russian friend made a very wry face on first tasting it, and I felt inclined at first to do likewise, but noticing that his grimaces made an unfavourable impression on the audience, I restrained my facial muscles, and looked as if I

liked it. Very soon I really came to like it, and learned to "drink fair" with those who had been accustomed to it from their childhood. By this feat I rose considerably in the estimation of the natives; for if one does not drink koomuiss, one cannot be sociable in the Bashkir sense of the term, and by acquiring the habit one adopts an essential principle of Bashkir nationality. I should certainly have preferred having a cup of it to myself, but I thought it well to conform to the habits of the country, and to accept the big wooden bowl when it was passed round. In return my friends made an important concession in my favour: they allowed me to smoke as I pleased, though they considered that, as the Prophet had refrained from tobacco, ordinary mortals should do the same.

Whilst the "loving-cup" was going round I distributed some small presents which I had brought for the purpose, and then proceeded to explain the object of my visit. In the distant country from which I came — far away to the westward — I had heard of the Bashkirs as a people possessing many strange customs, but very kind and hospitable to strangers. Of their kindness and hospitality I had already learned something by experience, and I hoped they would allow me to learn something of their mode of life, their customs, their songs, their history and their religion, in all of which I assured them my distant countrymen took a lively interest.

This little after-dinner speech was perhaps not quite in accordance with Bashkir etiquette, but it

apparently made a favourable impression. There was a decided murmur of approbation, and those who understood Russian translated my words to their less accomplished brethren. A short consultation ensued, and then there was a general shout of "Abdullah! Abdullah!" which was taken up and repeated by those standing outside.

In a few minutes Abdullah appeared, with a big, half-picked bone in his hand, and the lower part of his face besmeared with grease. He was a short, thin man, with a dark, sallow complexion, and a look of premature old age; but the suppressed smile that played about his mouth and a tremulous movement of his right eye-lid showed plainly that he had not yet forgotten the fun and frolic of youth. His dress was of richer and more gaudy material, but at the same time more tawdry and tattered, than that of the others. Altogether he looked like an *artiste* in distressed circumstances, and such he really was. At a word and a sign from the host he laid aside his bone and drew from under his green silk khalát a small wind-instrument resembling a flute or flageolet. On this he played a number of native airs. The first melodies which he played reminded me strongly of a Highland pibroch — at one moment low, solemn, and plaintive, then gradually rising into a soul-stirring, martial strain, and again descending to a plaintive wail. The amount of expression which he put into his simple instrument was truly marvellous. Then passing suddenly from grave to gay, he played a series of light, merry airs, and some

of the younger on-lookers got up and performed a dance as boisterous and ungraceful as an Irish jig.

This Abdullah turned out to be for me a most valuable acquaintance. He was a kind of Bashkir troubadour, well acquainted not only with the music, but also with the traditions, the history, the superstitions, and the folk-lore of his people. By the Okhoon and the Mullah he was regarded as a frivolous, worthless fellow, who had no regular, respectable means of gaining a livelihood, but among the men of less severe principles he was a general favourite. As he spoke Russian fluently I could converse with him freely without the aid of an interpreter, and he willingly placed all his store of knowledge at my disposal. When in the company of the Okhoon he was always solemn and taciturn, but as soon as he was relieved of that dignitary's presence he became lively and communicative.

Another of my new acquaintances was equally useful to me in another way. This was Mehemet Zián, who was not so intelligent as Abdullah, but much more sympathetic. In his open, honest face, and kindly, unaffected manner, there was something so irresistibly attractive that, before I had known him twenty-four hours, a sort of friendship had sprung up between us. He was a tall, muscular, broad-shouldered man, with features that indicated a mixture of European blood. Though already past middle age, he was still wiry and active — so active that he could, when on horseback, pick a stone off the ground without dismounting. He could, how-

ever, no longer perform this feat at full gallop, as he had been wont to do in his youth. His geographical knowledge was extremely limited and inaccurate — his mind being in this respect like those old Russian maps, in which the nations of the earth and a good many peoples who had never more than a mythical existence are jumbled together in hopeless confusion — but his geographical curiosity was insatiable. My travelling map — the first thing of the kind he had ever seen — interested him deeply. When he found that by simply examining it I could tell him the direction and distance of several places he knew, his face was like that of a child who sees for the first time a conjuror's performance; and when I explained the trick to him, and taught him to calculate the distance to Bokhara — the sacred city of the Mussulmans of that region — his delight was unbounded. I could not make him a present of my map, as I should have wished, for I had no other with me, but I promised to find ways and means of sending him one; and I kept my word by means of a native of the Karalýk district whom I discovered in Samára. Two or three years later I was informed by a Russian traveller, who had spent a night in the aoul, that he had seen there a map called "the Englishman's gift," and that he had been taught how to calculate the distance to Bokhara by a worthy Bashkir, called Mehemet Zián.

If Mehemet knew little of foreign countries he was thoroughly well acquainted with his own, and repaid me most liberally for my elementary lessons

in geography. With him I visited the neighbouring aouls. In all of them he had numerous acquaintances, and everywhere we were received with the greatest hospitality. I sought to avoid, not always successfully, festivities such as the one I have just described, partly because I knew that my hosts were generally poor and would not accept payment for the slaughtered sheep, and partly because I had reason to apprehend that they would express to me their esteem and affection *more Bashkirico;* but in koomuiss drinking, the ordinary occupation of these people when they have nothing to do, I had to indulge to a most inordinate extent. On these expeditions Abdullah generally accompanied us, and rendered valuable service as interpreter and troubadour. Mehemet could express himself in Russian, but his vocabulary failed him as soon as the conversation ran above very ordinary topics; Abdullah, on the contrary, was a first-rate interpreter, and under the influence of his musical pipe and lively talkativeness new acquaintances became sociable and communicative. Poor Abdullah! He was a kind of universal genius, but his faded, tattered khalát showed only too plainly that in Bashkiria, as in more civilised countries, universal genius and the artistic temperament lead to poverty rather than wealth.

I have no intention of troubling the reader with the miscellaneous facts which, with the assistance of these two friends, I succeeded in collecting — indeed, I could not if I would, for the notes I then made were afterwards lost — but I wish to say a

few words about the actual economic condition of the Bashkirs. They are at present passing from pastoral to agricultural life; and it is not a little interesting to note the causes which induce them to make this change, and the way in which it is made.

Philosophers have long held a theory of social development, according to which men were at first hunters, then shepherds, and lastly agriculturists. How far this theory is in accordance with reality we need not for the present inquire, but we may examine an important part of it and ask ourselves the question, Why did pastoral tribes adopt agriculture? The common explanation is that they changed their mode of life in consequence of some ill-defined, fortuitous circumstances. A great legislator arose amongst them and taught them to till the soil, or they came in contact with an agricultural race and adopted the customs of their neighbours. Such explanations may content those theorists who habitually draw their facts from their own internal consciousness, but they must appear eminently unsatisfactory to any one who has lived with a pastoral people. Pastoral life is so incomparably more agreeable than the hard lot of the agriculturist, and so much more in accordance with the natural indolence of human nature, that no great legislator, though he had the wisdom of Solon and the eloquence of Demosthenes, could possibly induce his fellow-countrymen to pass voluntarily from the one to the other. Of all the ordinary means of gaining a livelihood — with the exception perhaps of mining

— agriculture is the most laborious, and is never voluntarily adopted by men who have not been accustomed to it from their childhood. The life of a pastoral race, on the contrary, is an almost unbroken holiday, and I can imagine nothing except the prospect of starvation which could induce men who live by their flocks and herds to make the transition to agricultural life.

The prospect of starvation is, in fact, the cause of the transition — probably in all cases, and certainly in the case of the Bashkirs. So long as they had abundance of pasturage they never thought of tilling the soil. Their flocks and herds supplied them with all that they required, and enabled them to lead a tranquil, indolent existence. No great legislator arose among them to teach them the use of the plough and the sickle, and when they saw the Russian peasants on their borders laboriously ploughing and reaping, they probably looked on them with compassion, and certainly never thought of following their example. But an impersonal legislator came to them — a very severe and tyrannical legislator, who would not brook disobedience — I mean Economic Necessity. By the encroachments of the Ural Cossacks on the east and by the ever-advancing wave of Russian colonisation from the north and west, their territory had been greatly diminished. With diminution of the pasturage came diminution of the live stock, their sole means of subsistence. In spite of their passively conservative spirit they had to look about for some new means of obtaining food

and clothing — some new mode of life requiring less extensive territorial possessions. It was only then that they began to think of imitating their neighbours. They saw that the neighbouring Russian peasant lived comfortably on thirty or forty acres of land, whilst they possessed a hundred and fifty acres per male, and were in danger of starvation. The conclusion to be drawn from this was self-evident — they ought at once to begin ploughing and sowing. But there was a very serious obstacle to the putting of this principle in practice. Agriculture certainly requires less land than sheep-farming, but it requires very much more labour, and to hard work the Bashkirs were not accustomed. They could bear hardships and fatigues in the shape of long journeys on horseback, but the severe, monotonous labour of the plough and the sickle was not to their taste. At first, therefore, they adopted a compromise. They had a portion of their land tilled by Russian peasants, and ceded to these a part of the produce in return for the labour expended; in other words, they assumed the position of landed proprietors, and farmed part of their land on the *métayage* system.

The process of transition had reached this point in several aouls which I visited. My friend Mehemet Zián showed me at some distance from the tents his plot of arable land, and introduced me to the peasant who tilled it — a Little-Russian, who assured me that the arrangement satisfied all parties. The process of transition cannot, however, stop here.

The compromise is merely a temporary expedient. The cultivation of virgin soil gives very abundant harvests, sufficient to support both the labourer and the indolent proprietor, but this virgin fertility soon becomes exhausted, and after a few years the soil gives only a very moderate revenue. The proprietors, therefore, must sooner or later dispense with the labourers, who take half of the produce as their recompense, and must themselves put their hand to the plough.

Thus we see the Bashkirs are, properly speaking, no longer a pastoral, nomadic people. The discovery of this fact caused me some little disappointment, and in the hope of finding a tribe in a more primitive condition I visited the Kirghis of the Inner Horde, who occupy the country to the southward, in the direction of the Caspian. Here for the first time I saw the genuine Steppe in the full sense of the term — a country level as the sea, with not a hillock or even a gentle undulation to break the straight line of the horizon, and not a patch of cultivation, a tree, a bush, or even a stone, to diversify the monotonous expanse. Traversing such a region is, I need scarcely say, very weary work — all the more as there are no milestones or other landmarks to show you the progress you are making. Still it is not so overwhelmingly wearisome as might be supposed. In the morning you may watch the vast lakes, with their rugged promontories and well-wooded banks, which the mirage creates for your amusement. Then during the course of the day there are always one

or two trifling incidents which arouse you for a little from your somnolence. Now you descry a couple of horsemen on the distant horizon, and watch them as they approach; and when they come alongside you may have a talk with them if you know the language or have an interpreter; or you may amuse yourself with a little pantomime, if articulate speech is impossible. Now you encounter a long train of camels marching along with solemn, stately step, and speculate as to the contents of the big packages with which they are laden. Now you encounter the carcase of a horse that has fallen by the wayside, and watch the dogs and the steppe eagles fighting over their prey; and if you are murderously inclined you may take a shot at these great birds, for they are ignorantly brave, and will sometimes allow you to approach within thirty or forty yards. Now you perceive — most pleasant sight of all — a group of haystack-shaped tents in the distance; and you hurry on to enjoy the grateful shade, and quench your thirst with "deep, deep draughts" of refreshing koomuiss.

During my journey through the Kirghis country I was accompanied by a Russian gentleman, who had provided himself with a circular letter from the hereditary chieftain of the Horde, a personage who rejoiced in the imposing name of Genghis Khan,[1] and claimed to be a descendant of the great Mongol conqueror. This document assured us a good recep-

[1] I have adopted the ordinary English spelling of this name. The Kirghis and the Russians pronounce it "Tchinghis."

tion in the aouls through which we passed. Every Kirghis who saw it treated it with profound respect, and professed to put all his goods and chattels at our service. But in spite of this powerful recommendation we met with none of that friendly cordiality and communicativeness which I had found among the Bashkirs. A tent with an unlimited quantity of cushions was always set apart for our accommodation; the sheep was killed and boiled for our dinner, and the pails of koomuiss were regularly brought for our refreshment; but all this was evidently done as a matter of duty and not as a spontaneous expression of hospitality. When we determined once or twice to prolong our visit beyond the term originally announced, I could perceive that our host was not at all delighted by the change of our plans. The only consolation we had was, that those who entertained us made no scruples about accepting payment for the food and shelter supplied.

To the south-west of the Lower Volga, in the flat region lying to the north of the Caucasus, we find another pastoral tribe, the Kalmuks, differing widely from the two former in language, in physiognomy, and in religion. Their language, a dialect of the Mongolian, has no close affinity with any other language in this part of the world. In respect of religion they are likewise isolated, for they are Buddhists, and have consequently no co-religionists nearer than India or Tibet. But it is their physiognomy that most strikingly distinguishes them from the surround-

ing peoples, and stamps them as Mongols of the purest water. To say simply that they are ugly would be to pay them an unmerited compliment. There is something almost infra-human in their ugliness. They show in an exaggerated degree all those repulsive traits which we see toned down and refined in the face of an average Chinaman. As they belong to one of the recognised races of mankind, we must assume that they have souls; but it is difficult, when we see them for the first time, to believe that a human soul lurks behind their expressionless, flattened faces and small, dull, obliquely-set eyes. Placed in a group of them the Bashkir or even the ordinary Kirghis would appear beautiful by contrast. If the Tartar and Turkish races are really descended from ancestors of that type, then we must assume that they have received in the course of time a large admixture of Aryan or Semitic blood.

But we must not be too hard on the poor Kalmuks, or judge of their character by their unprepossessing appearance. They are by no means so unhuman as they look. Men who have lived among them have assured me that they are decidedly intelligent, especially in all matters relating to cattle, and that they are — though somewhat addicted to cattle-lifting and other primitive customs not tolerated in the more advanced stages of civilisation — by no means wanting in some of the better qualities of human nature.

Until very recently there was a fourth pastoral

tribe in this region — the Nogai Tartars. They occupied the plains to the north of the Sea of Azof, but they are no longer to be found there. Shortly after the Crimean War they emigrated to Turkey, and their lands are now occupied by Russian, German, Bulgarian, and Montenegrin colonists.

Among these pastoral tribes the Kalmuks may be regarded as recent intruders. They first appeared in the seventeenth century, and were long formidable on account of their great numbers and compact organisation; but in 1771 the majority of them suddenly struck their tents and retreated to their old home in the north of the Celestial Empire. Those who remained were easily pacified, and have long since lost, under the influence of unbroken peace and a strong Russian administration, their old warlike spirit. Their latest military exploits were performed during the last years of the Napoleonic wars, and were not of a very serious kind; a troop of them accompanied the Russian army, and astonished Western Europe by their uncouth features, their strange costume, and their primitive accoutrements, among which their curious bows and arrows figured conspicuously.

The other pastoral tribes which I have mentioned are the last remnants of those nomadic hordes which from time immemorial down to a comparatively recent period held the vast plains of Southern Russia. The long struggle between those hordes and the agricultural colonists from the north-west — closely resembling the long struggle between the

Redskins and the white settlers on the prairies of North America — forms an important page of Russian history.

This struggle between agricultural colonisation and nomadic barbarism went on for centuries with varying success. In the earliest period of Russian history the colonists advanced rapidly, and gained possession of a large portion of the Steppe; but in the thirteenth century the tide of fortune suddenly turned. The whole of the country was conquered by nomadic hordes, and for more than two centuries Russia was in a certain sense ruled by Tartar Khans.

CHAPTER VI

THE TARTAR DOMINATION

THE Tartar invasion, with its direct and indirect consequences, is a subject which has far more than a mere antiquarian interest. To the influence of the Mongols are commonly attributed many peculiarities in the actual condition and national character of the Russians of the present day, and some writers would even have us believe that the men whom we call Russians are simply Tartars half disguised by a thin varnish of European civilisation. Under these circumstances it may be well to inquire what the Tartar domination really was, and how far it affected the historical development and national character of the Russian people. If I cannot throw on the subject all the light that could be desired, I may at least do something towards dispelling certain current fallacies which too often gain credence.

The story of the conquest may be briefly told. In 1224 the chieftains of the Poloftsi — one of those pastoral tribes which roamed on the Steppe and habitually carried on a predatory warfare with the Russians of the south — sent deputies to Mistislaf the Brave, Prince of Gallicia, to inform him that their country had been invaded from the south-east

by strong, cruel enemies called Tartars — strange-looking men with brown faces, eyes small and wide apart, thick lips, broad shoulders, and black hair. "To-day," said the deputies, "they have seized our country, and to-morrow they will seize yours if you do not help us."

Mistislaf had probably no objection to the Poloftsi being annihilated by some tribe stronger and fiercer than themselves, for they gave him a great deal of trouble by their frequent raids; but he perceived the force of the argument about his own turn coming next, and thought it wise to assist his usually hostile neighbours. For the purpose of warding off the danger he called together the neighbouring Princes, and urged them to join him in an expedition against the new enemy. The expedition was undertaken, and ended in disaster. On the Kalka, a small river falling into the Sea of Azof, the Russian army met the invaders, and was completely routed. The country was thereby opened to the victors, but they did not follow up their advantage. After advancing for some distance they suddenly wheeled round and disappeared.

Thus ended unexpectedly the first visit of these unwelcome strangers. Thirteen years afterwards they returned, and were not so easily got rid of. An enormous Horde crossed the River Ural, and advanced into the heart of the country, pillaging, burning, devastating, and murdering. Nowhere did they meet with serious resistance. The Princes made no attempt to combine against the common

enemy. Nearly all the principal towns were laid in ashes and the inhabitants were killed or carried off as slaves. Having conquered Russia, they advanced Westward, and threw all Europe into alarm. The panic reached even England, and interrupted, it is said, for a time the herring fishing on the coast. Western Europe, however, escaped their ravages. After visiting Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Servia, and Dalmatia, they retreated to the Lower Volga, and the Russian Princes were summoned thither to do homage to the victorious Khan.

At first the Russians had only very vague notions as to who this terrible enemy was. The old chronicler remarks briefly: "For our sins unknown peoples have appeared. No one knows who they are or whence they have come, or to what race and faith they belong. They are commonly called Tartars, but some call them Tauermen, and others Petchenegs. Who they really are is known only to God, and perhaps to wise men deeply read in books." Some of these "wise men deeply read in books" supposed them to be the idolatrous Moabites who had in Old Testament times harassed God's chosen people, whilst others thought that they must be the descendants of the men whom Gideon had driven out, of whom a revered saint had prophesied that they would come in the latter days and conquer the whole earth, from the East even unto the Euphrates, and from the Tigris even unto the Black Sea.

We are now happily in a position to dispense

with such vague ethnographical speculations. From the accounts of several European travellers who visited Tartary about that time, and from the writings of various Oriental historians, we know a great deal about these barbarians who conquered Russia and frightened the Western nations.

The germ of the vast Horde which swept over Asia and advanced into the centre of Europe was a small pastoral tribe living in the hilly country to the north of China, near the sources of the Amoor. This tribe was neither more warlike nor more formidable than its neighbours till near the close of the twelfth century, when there appeared in it a man who is described as "a mighty hunter before the Lord." Of him and his people we have a brief description by a Chinese author of the time: "A man of gigantic stature, with broad forehead and long beard, and remarkable for his bravery. As to his people, their faces are broad, flat, and four-cornered, with prominent cheek-bones; their eyes have no upper eyelashes; they have very little hair in their beards and moustaches; their exterior is very repulsive." This man of gigantic stature was no other than Genghis Khan. He began by subduing and incorporating into his army the surrounding tribes, conquered with their assistance a great part of Northern China, and then, leaving one of his generals to complete the conquest of the Celestial Empire, he led his army westward with the ambitious design of conquering the whole world. "As there is but one God in heaven," he was wont to say, "so there should

be but one ruler on earth;" and this one universal ruler he himself aspired to be.

A European army necessarily diminishes in force and its existence becomes more and more imperilled as it advances from its base of operations into a foreign and hostile country. Not so a Horde like that of Genghis Khan in a country such as that which it had to traverse. It had and needed no base of operations, for it took with it its flocks, its tents, and all its worldly goods. Properly speaking, it was not an army at all, but rather a people in movement. The grassy steppes fed the flocks, and the flocks fed the warriors; and with such a simple commissariat system there was no necessity for keeping up communications with the point of departure. Instead of diminishing in numbers, the Horde constantly increased as it moved forwards. The nomadic tribes which it encountered on its way, composed of men who found a home wherever they found pasture and drinking-water, required little persuasion to make them join the onward movement. By means of this terrible instrument of conquest Genghis succeeded in creating a colossal Empire, stretching from the Carpathians to the eastern shores of Asia, and from the Arctic Ocean to the Himalayas. If he did not realise his dream of becoming the ruler of the whole earth, he could at least boast that never in the history of the world had a single man ruled over such vast possessions.

Genghis was no mere ruthless destroyer; he was at the same time one of the greatest administrators

the world has ever seen. But his administrative genius could not work miracles. His vast Empire, founded on conquest and composed of the most heterogeneous elements, had no principle of organic life in it, and could not possibly be long-lived. It had been created by him, and it perished with him. For some time after his death the dignity of Grand Khan was held by some one of his descendants, and the centralised administration was nominally preserved; but the local rulers rapidly emancipated themselves from the central authority, and within half a century after the death of its founder the great Mongol Empire was little more than "a geographical expression."

With the dismemberment of the Mongol Empire the danger for Eastern Europe was by no means at an end. The independent Hordes were scarcely less formidable than the Empire itself. A grandson of Genghis formed on the Russian frontier a new State, commonly known as Kiptchak or the Golden Horde, and built a capital called Seraï on one of the arms of the Lower Volga. This capital, which has since so completely disappeared that there is some doubt as to its site, is described by Ibn Batuta, who visited it in the fifteenth century, as a very great, populous, and beautiful city, possessing many mosques, fine market-places, and broad streets, in which were to be seen merchants from Babylon, Egypt, Syria, and other countries. Here lived the Khans who kept Russia in subjection for two centuries.

In conquering Russia the Tartars had no wish to

take possession of the soil, or to take into their own hands the local administration. What they wanted was not land, of which they had enough and to spare, but movable property which they might enjoy without giving up their pastoral, nomadic life. They applied, therefore, to Russia the same method of extracting supplies as they had used in other countries. As soon as their authority had been formally acknowledged they sent officials into the country to number the inhabitants and to collect an amount of tribute proportionate to the population. This was a severe burden for the people, not only on account of the sum demanded, but also on account of the manner in which it was raised. The exactions and cruelty of the tax-gatherers led to local insurrections, and the insurrections were of course always severely punished. But there was never any general military occupation of the country or any wholesale confiscations of land, and the existing political organisation was left undisturbed. The modern method of dealing with annexed provinces was totally unknown to the Tartars. The Khans never for a moment dreamed of attempting to Tartarise their Russian subjects. They demanded simply an oath of allegiance from the Princes,[1] and a certain sum of tribute from the people. The vanquished were allowed to retain their land, their religion, their language, their courts of justice, and all their other institutions.

[1] During the Tartar domination Russia was composed of a large number of independent principalities.

At first there was and could be very little mutual confidence between the conquerors and the conquered. The Princes anxiously looked for an opportunity of throwing off the galling yoke, and the people chafed under the exactions and cruelty of the tribute-collectors, whilst the Khans took precautions to prevent insurrection, and threatened to devastate the country if their authority was not respected. But in the course of time this mutual distrust and hostility greatly lessened. The Princes gradually perceived that all attempts at resistance would be fruitless, and became reconciled to their new position. Instead of seeking to throw off the Khan's authority, they sought to gain his favour, in the hope of thereby forwarding their personal interests. For this purpose they paid frequent visits to the Tartar chief, made rich presents to his wives and courtiers, received from him charters confirming their authority, and sometimes even married members of his family. Some of them used the favour thus acquired for extending their possessions at the expense of neighbouring Princes of their own race, and did not hesitate to call in Tartar Hordes to their assistance. The Khans, in their turn, placed greater confidence in their vassals, entrusted them with the task of collecting the tribute, recalled their own officials, who were a constant eyesore to the people, and abstained from all interference in the internal affairs of the principalities so long as the tribute was regularly paid. The Princes acted, in short, as the Khan's lieutenants, and became to a certain extent

Tartarised. Some of them carried this policy so far that they were reproached by the people with "loving beyond measure the Tartars and their language, and with giving them too freely land, and gold, and goods of every kind."

Had the Khans of the Golden Horde been prudent, far-seeing statesmen, they might have long retained their supremacy over Russia. In reality they showed themselves miserably deficient in political talent. Seeking merely to extract from the country as much tribute as possible, they overlooked all higher considerations, and by this culpable shortsightedness brought about their own political ruin. Instead of keeping all the Russian Princes on the same level and thereby rendering them all equally feeble, they were constantly bribed or cajoled into giving to one or more of their vassals a pre-eminence over the others. At first this pre-eminence seems to have consisted in little more than the empty title of Grand Prince; but the vassals thus favoured soon transformed the barren distinction into a genuine power, by arrogating to themselves the exclusive right of holding direct communications with the Horde, and compelling the minor Princes to deliver to them the Tartar tribute. If any of the lower Princes refused to acknowledge this intermediate authority, the Grand Prince could easily crush them by representing them at the Horde as rebels who did not pay their tribute. Such an accusation would cause the accused to be summoned before the Supreme Tribunal, where the procedure was extremely sum-

mary and the Grand Prince had always the means of obtaining a decision in his own favour.

Of all the Princes who strove in this way to increase their influence, the most successful were the Princes of Moscow. They were not a chivalrous race, or one with which the severe moralist can sympathise, but they were largely endowed with cunning, tact, and perseverance, and were little hampered by conscientious scruples. Having early discovered that the liberal distribution of money at the Tartar court was the surest means of gaining favour, they lived parsimoniously at home and spent their savings at the Horde. To secure the continuance of the favour thus acquired, they were ready to form matrimonial alliances with the Khan's family, and to act zealously as his lieutenants. When Novgorod, the haughty, turbulent Republic, refused to pay the yearly tribute, they quelled the insurrection and punished the leaders; and when the inhabitants of Tver rose against the Tartars and compelled their Prince to make common cause with them, the wily Muscovite hastened to the Tartar court and received from the Khan the revolted principality, with 50,000 Tartars to support his authority.

Thus those cunning Moscow Princes "loved the Tartars beyond measure" so long as the Khan was irresistibly powerful, but as his power waned they stood forth as his rivals. When the Golden Horde, like the great Empire of which it had once formed a part, fell to pieces, these ambitious Princes read the signs of the times, and put themselves at the head of

the liberation movement, which was at first unsuccessful, but ultimately freed the country from the hated Tartar yoke.

From this brief sketch of the Tartar domination the reader will readily perceive that it did not by any means Tartarise the country. The Tartars never settled in Russia Proper, and never amalgamated with the people. So long as they retained their semi-pagan, semi-Buddhistic religion, a certain number of their notables became Christians and were absorbed by the Russian Noblesse; but as soon as the Horde adopted Islam, this movement was arrested. There was no blending of the two races such as has taken place — and is still taking place — between the Russian peasantry and the Finnish tribes of the North. The Russians remained Christians, and the Tartars remained Mahometans; and this difference of religion raised an impassable barrier between the two nationalities.

It must, however, be admitted that the Tartar domination, though it had little influence on the life and habits of the people, had a very deep and lasting influence on the political development of the nation. At the time of the conquest Russia was composed of a large number of independent principalities, all governed by descendants of Rurik. As these principalities were not geographical or ethnographical units, but mere artificial, arbitrarily defined districts, which were regularly subdivided or combined according to the hereditary rights of the Princes, it is highly probable that they would in any case

have been sooner or later united under one sceptre; but it is quite certain that the policy of the Khans helped to accelerate this unification and to create the autocratic power which has since been wielded by the Tsars. If the principalities had been united without foreign interference, we should probably have found in the united State some form of political organisation corresponding to that which existed in the component parts — some mixed form of government, in which the political power would have been more or less equally divided between the Tsar and the people. The Tartar rule interrupted this normal development by extinguishing all free political life. The first Tsars of Muscovy were the political descendants not of the old independent Princes, but of the Tartar Khans. It may be said, therefore, that the autocratic power, which has been during the last four centuries out of all comparison the most important factor in Russian history, was in a certain sense created by the Tartar domination.

CHAPTER VII

THE COSSACKS

TO conquer the Tartars was no easy task, but to pacify them and introduce law and order amongst them was a work of much greater difficulty. Long after they had lost their political independence they retained their old pastoral mode of life, and harassed the agricultural population of the outlying provinces in the same way as the Red Indians harassed the white colonists in the western territories of America in days gone by. What considerably added to the difficulty was that a large section of the Horde, inhabiting the Crimea and the steppe to the north of the Black Sea, escaped conquest by submitting to the Ottoman Turks and becoming tributaries of the Sultan. The Turks were at that time a formidable aggressive power, with which the Tsars of Muscovy were too weak to cope successfully, and the Khan of the Crimea could always, when hard pressed by his northern neighbours, obtain assistance from Constantinople. This potentate exercised a nominal authority over the pastoral tribes which roamed on the steppe between the Crimea and the Russian frontier, but he had neither the power nor the desire to control their

aggressive tendencies. Their raids in Russian and Polish territory ensured, among other advantages, a regular and plentiful supply of slaves, which formed the chief article of export from Kaffa — the modern Theodosia — and from the other seaports of the coast.

To protect the agricultural population of the steppe against the raids of these thieving, cattle-lifting, kidnapping neighbours, the Tsars of Muscovy and the Kings of Poland built forts, constructed palisades, dug trenches, and kept up a regular military cordon. The troops composing this cordon were called Cossacks, but these were not the Cossacks best known to history and romance. The genuine "Free Cossacks" lived beyond the frontier on the debatable land which lay between the two hostile races, and there they formed self-governing military communities. Each one of the rivers flowing southwards — the Dnieper, the Don, the Volga, and the Yaïk or Ural — was held by a community of these Free Cossacks, and no one, whether Christian or Tartar, was allowed to pass through their territory without their permission. Officially they were Russians, professed champions of Orthodox Christianity, and — with the exception of those of the Dnieper — loyal subjects of the Tsar, but in reality they were something different. Though they were Russian by origin, language, and sympathy, the habit of kidnapping Tartar women introduced among them a certain admixture of Tartar blood. Though self-constituted champions of Christianity and haters

of Islam, they troubled themselves very little with religion, and did not submit to the ecclesiastical authorities. As to their political status, it cannot be easily defined. Whilst professing allegiance and devotion to the Tsar, they did not think it necessary to obey him, except in so far as his orders suited their own convenience. And the Tsar, it must be confessed, acted towards them in a similar fashion. When he found it convenient he called them his faithful subjects; and when complaints were made to him about their raids on Turkish territory, he declared that they were not his subjects, but runaways and brigands, and that the Sultan might punish them as he thought fit. At the same time, however, the so-called runaways and brigands regularly received supplies and ammunition from Moscow, as is amply proved by recently-published documents. Down to the middle of the seventeenth century the Cossacks of the Dnieper stood in a similar relation to the Polish kings, but at that time they threw off their allegiance to Poland, and became subjects of the Tsars of Muscovy.

Of these semi-independent military communities, which formed a continuous barrier along the southern and south-eastern frontier, the most celebrated were the Zaporovians[1] of the Dnieper, and the Cossacks of the Don.

The head-quarters or capital of the Zaporovians

[1] The name "Zaporovians," by which they are known in the West, is a corruption of the Russian word Zaporozhtsi, which means "those who live beyond the Rapids."

was a fortified camp on the Dnieper, below the point where a ridge of rocks, lying across the bed of the river, forms a series of rapids. On approaching it from the steppe the traveller first entered a faubourg or bazaar, in which there was a considerable population of Jewish traders. At the further end of this faubourg stood a fortified tower with a big gate, beyond which lay a wide, open space, surrounded by thirty-eight enormous wooden sheds. In each of these sheds, which were simply large, scantily-furnished halls, lived a *kurén*, or troop of Cossacks, containing sometimes as many as 600 men. Here during the day the members of the *kurén* assembled for the common meals, and here at night they slept upon the floor. In the open space were held the general assemblies for the yearly election of the Atamán, or chief, and for the discussion of all important questions touching the public weal. The assemblies were always noisy, and sometimes ended in bloodshed, for the Zaporovians were little accustomed to exercise self-control, and were quick to resent an insulting word from friend or foe. Here, too, might be seen, in ordinary peaceful times, little groups of Cossacks — too often, it must be confessed, in a state of intoxication — strolling about with their beloved "lulki" (tobacco-pipes), or basking lazily in the sunshine, and talking about the prospects of the fishing season, or about some intended raid on the Tartar aouls. Beyond this space, which might be called the forum, was a smaller enclosure containing the public treasury, the

residence of the Atamán — a small, modest, wooden house, like that of a well-to-do peasant — and a church dedicated to the Virgin. Within these two enclosures no woman was ever allowed to enter.

The Zaporovian Commonwealth has been compared sometimes to ancient Sparta, and sometimes to the mediæval Military Orders, but it had in reality quite a different character. In Sparta the nobles kept in subjection a large population of slaves, and were themselves constantly under the severe discipline of the magistrates. These Cossacks of the Dnieper, on the contrary, lived by fishing, hunting, and marauding, and knew nothing of discipline, except in time of war. Amongst all the inhabitants of the Setch — so the fortified camp was called — there reigned the most perfect equality. The common saying, "Bear patiently, Cossack, you will one day be Atamán!" was often realised; for every year the office-bearers laid down the insignia of office in presence of the general assembly, and after thanking the brotherhood for the honour they had enjoyed, retired to their former position of common Cossack. At the election which followed this ceremony, any member could be chosen chief of his *kurén*, and any chief of a *kurén* could be chosen Atamán.

The comparison of these bold Borderers with the mediæval Military Orders is scarcely less forced. They called themselves, indeed, "Lytsars" — a corruption of the Russian word "Ritsar," which is in its turn a corruption of the German "Ritter" — talked of knightly honour (lýtsarskaya tchest'), and

sometimes proclaimed themselves the champions of Greek Orthodoxy against the Roman Catholicism of the Poles and the Mahometanism of the Tartars; but religion occupied in their minds a very secondary place. Their great object in life was the acquisition of booty. To attain this object they lived in almost perpetual warfare with the Tartars, lifted their cattle, pillaged their aouls, swept the Black Sea in flotillas of small boats, and occasionally sacked important sea-coast towns such as Varna and Sinope. When Tartar booty could not be easily obtained, they turned their attention to the Slavonic populations; and when hard pressed by Christian potentates they did not hesitate to put themselves under the protection of the Sultan.

The Cossacks of the Don, of the Volga, and of the Yaïk had a somewhat different organisation. They had no fortified camp like the Setch, but lived in villages, and assembled as necessity demanded. As they were completely beyond the sphere of Polish influence, they knew nothing about "knightly honour" and similar conceptions of Western chivalry; they even adopted many Tartar customs, and loved in time of peace to strut about in gorgeous Tartar costumes. Besides this, they were nearly all emigrants from Great Russia, and mostly Old Ritualists or Sectarians, whilst the Zaporovians were Little-Russians and Orthodox.

These military communities rendered valuable service to Russia. The best means of protecting the southern frontier was to have as allies a large

body of men leading the same kind of life and capable of carrying on the same kind of warfare as the nomadic marauders; and such a body of men were the Free Cossacks. The sentiment of self-preservation and the desire of booty kept them constantly on the alert. By sending out small parties in all directions, by "procuring tongues" — that is to say, by kidnapping and torturing straggling Tartars with a view to extracting information from them — by keeping spies in the enemy's territory, and by similar devices, they were generally apprised beforehand of any intended incursion. When danger threatened, the ordinary precautions were redoubled. Day and night patrols kept watch at the points where the enemy was expected, and as soon as sure signs of his approach were discovered, a pile of tarred barrels prepared for the purpose was fired to give the alarm. Rapidly the signal was repeated at one point of observation after another, and by this primitive system of telegraphy in the course of a few hours the whole district was up in arms. If the invaders were not too numerous, they were at once attacked and driven back. If they were too numerous to be successfully resisted, they were allowed to pass, but a troop of Cossacks was sent to pillage their aouls in their absence, whilst another and larger force was collected, in order to intercept them when they were returning home laden with booty.

Notwithstanding these valuable services, the Cossack communities were a constant source of diplomatic difficulties and political dangers. As they

paid very little attention to the orders of the Government, they supplied the Sultan with any number of *casus belli*, and were often ready to turn their arms against the power to which they professed allegiance. During "the troublous times," for example, when the national existence was endangered by civil strife and foreign invasion, they overran the country, robbing, pillaging, and burning as they were wont to do in the Tartar aouls. At a later period the Don Cossacks twice raised formidable insurrections — first under Stenka Razin (1670), and secondly under Pugatchéf (1773) — and during the war between Peter the Great and Charles XII. of Sweden the Zaporovians took the side of the Swedish king.

The Government naturally strove to put an end to this danger, and ultimately succeeded. All the Cossacks were deprived of their independence, but the fate of the various communities was different. Those of the Volga were transferred to the Terek, where they had abundant occupation in guarding the frontier against the incursions of the Eastern Caucasian tribes. The Zaporovians held tenaciously to their "Dnieper liberties," and resisted all interference, till they were forcibly disbanded in the time of Catherine II. The majority of them fled to Turkey, where some of their descendants are still to be found, and the remainder were settled on the Kubán, where they could lead their old life by carrying on an irregular warfare with the tribes of the Western Caucasus. Since the capture of Shamyl

and the pacification of the Caucasus, this Cossack population, extending in an unbroken line from the Sea of Azof to the Caspian, have been able to turn their attention to peaceful pursuits, and now raise large quantities of wheat for exportation; but they still retain their martial bearing, and some of them regret the good old times when a brush with the Circassians was an ordinary occurrence and the work of tilling the soil was often diversified with a more exciting kind of occupation. The romance of their life is gone, and the most formidable enemy with which they have now to contend is the wild boar living in the forests of reeds which cover the low, marshy banks of the water-courses; but a thousand thrilling incidents of border warfare are still fresh in their memory. More than once during my travels in this region the tedium of long journeys was enlivened by my Yemstchik relating to me stirring incidents from his personal experience. The Circassians, it seems, rarely attacked their opponents openly, but sought to pass through the line unperceived in order to plunder the agricultural population in the rear; and the rapidity of their movements, together with their intimate knowledge of the country, often enabled them to do this successfully. After seeing many specimens of both races, I could appreciate the wisdom of these tactics, and had no difficulty in believing that the light, agile Circassians, however brave they may have been, were no match for the big, stalwart Cossacks in a fair, hand-to-hand fight, in which weight could be brought into play.

Nowhere, indeed, have I met — except perhaps in Montenegro — with such magnificent specimens of the *genus homo* as among these gigantic, moustachioed descendants of the Zaporovians. If there are still any authors of the Fenimore Cooper school who wish to collect materials for exciting tales of adventure, I would recommend them to learn Russian and spend a few months in the Cossack stanitsas of the Terek and the Kubán.

The Cossacks of the Yaïk and the Don have been allowed to remain in their old homes, but they have been deprived of their independence and self-government, and their social organisation has been completely changed. The boisterous popular assemblies which formerly decided all public affairs have been abolished, and the custom of choosing the Atamán and other office-bearers by popular election has been replaced by a system of regular promotion, according to rules elaborated in St. Petersburg.

This change has destroyed the social equality which was in old times a distinctive feature of these communities. The officers and their families now compose a kind of hereditary aristocracy, which has succeeded in appropriating, by means of Imperial grants, a large portion of the land which was formerly common property. The common Cossacks are now simply a species of mounted militia. They possess a large amount of fertile land, and are exempted from all direct taxation; and in return for these privileges they are obliged to equip themselves at their own expense, and to serve at home or elsewhere as

the military authorities think fit to command. In time of peace the majority of them are allowed to remain at home, and have to turn out merely for a short period in summer; but a very large number of them are constantly required for active service, and are to be met with in all parts of the Empire, from the Prussian to the Chinese frontier. In the Asiatic Provinces their services are invaluable. Capable of enduring an incredible amount of fatigue and all manner of privations, they can live and thrive in conditions which would soon disable regular troops. The capacity of self-adaptation, which is characteristic of the Russian people generally, is possessed by them in the highest degree. When placed on some distant Asiatic frontier they can at once transform themselves into squatters — building their own house, raising crops of grain, and living as colonists without neglecting their military duties. If they require cattle they can "lift" them, either in the territory beyond the frontier or in the region which they are supposed to protect — precisely as their ancestors did centuries ago. Thus they do their work effectually at a very small cost to the Imperial exchequer. How far the system is acceptable to the local population is, of course, a different question. In outlying provinces I have often heard people complain that Cossack protection was, on the whole, rather expensive; but perhaps these complaints are unworthy of attention, for people everywhere object to their own local rates, and wish to have them defrayed by the national treasury.

The Cossacks regard themselves as the most valuable troops which the Tsar possesses, believing themselves capable of performing anything within the bounds of human possibility, and a good deal that lies beyond that limit. More than once Don Cossacks have assured me that if the Tsar had allowed them to fit out a flotilla of small boats during the Crimean War they would have captured the British fleet, as their ancestors used to capture Turkish galleys on the Black Sea!

In old times, throughout the whole territory of the Don Cossacks, agriculture was prohibited on pain of death. It is generally supposed that this measure was adopted with a view to preserve the martial spirit of the inhabitants, but this hypothesis appears to me extremely far-fetched and very improbable. The great majority of the Cossacks, averse to all regular, laborious occupations, wished to live by fishing, hunting, cattle-breeding, and marauding, but there was always amongst them a considerable number of immigrants — runaway serfs from the interior, who had been accustomed to live by agriculture. These latter wished to raise crops on the fertile virgin soil, and if they had been allowed to do so they would have to some extent spoiled the pastures. We have here, I believe, the true reason for the above-mentioned prohibition, and this view is strongly confirmed by analogous facts which I have observed in another locality. In the Kirghis territory the poorer inhabitants of the aouls near the frontier, having few or no cattle, wish to let part

of the common land to the neighbouring Russian peasantry for agricultural purposes; but the richer inhabitants, who possess flocks and herds, strenuously oppose this movement, and would doubtless prohibit it under pain of death if they had the power, because all agricultural encroachments diminish the pasture-land.

Whatever was the real reason of the prohibition, practical necessity proved in the long run too strong for the anti-agriculturists. As the population augmented and the opportunities for marauding decreased, the majority had to overcome their repugnance to husbandry; and soon large patches of ploughed land or waving grain were to be seen in the vicinity of the "stanitsas," as the Cossack villages are termed. At first there was no attempt to regulate this new use of the *ager publicus*. Each Cossack who wished to raise a crop ploughed and sowed wherever he thought fit, and retained as long as he chose the land thus appropriated; and when the soil began to show signs of exhaustion, he abandoned his plot and ploughed elsewhere. But this unregulated use of the communal property could not long continue. As the number of agriculturists increased, quarrels frequently arose and sometimes terminated in bloodshed. Still worse evils appeared when markets were created in the vicinity, and it became possible to sell the grain for exportation. In some stanitsas the richer families appropriated enormous quantities of the common land by using several teams of oxen, or by hiring peasants in the nearest

villages to come and plough for them; and instead of abandoning the land after raising two or three crops they retained possession of it, and came to regard it as their private property. Thus the whole of the arable land, or at least the best parts of it, became actually, if not legally, the private property of a few families, whilst the less energetic or less fortunate inhabitants of the stanitsa had only parcels of comparatively barren soil, or had no land whatever, and descended to the position of agricultural labourers.

The landless members of the community could not emigrate, because they were practically chained to the locality by the military organisation, and they required to have some property in order to equip themselves for military service and support their families during their absence. They were, in fact, in the anomalous position of feudal vassals obliged to render military service but deprived of the land necessary for the fulfilment of their obligations, and they naturally murmured against the monopolists who had expropriated them. As the discontent led to serious disorders, a remedy had to be sought. First a palliative measure was tried — the Commune, being responsible to the Government for the number of men required for active service, equipped those who were too poor to equip themselves. But this did not satisfy the landless members. They justly complained that they had to bear the same burdens as those who possessed the land, and that therefore they ought to enjoy the same privileges.

The old spirit of equality was still strong amongst them, and they ultimately succeeded in asserting their rights. In accordance with their demands the appropriated land was confiscated by the Commune, and the system of periodical distributions, which I have already described, was introduced. By this system each adult male possesses a share of the land.

The mode of distribution differs in different localities. Here, for instance, is the arrangement adopted in Kazánskaya Stanitsa. The whole of the arable land, with the exception of a portion reserved for minors, has been divided into a number of lots corresponding to the number of males who have attained the age of seventeen. The arrangement has been made for a term of six years. Those who attain the age of seventeen during that period receive a portion of the land held in reserve. Widows receive an amount proportionate to the number of their young children; those who have less than three receive half a share; those who have three receive a full share; and those who have more than three receive two shares. Each member, as soon as he receives his share, is free to do with it as he pleases; one cultivates it himself, another lets it for a yearly sum, and a third gives it to a neighbour on condition of receiving a certain portion of the produce. Some of the richer families cultivate a considerable area, for there are always many members willing to sell the usufruct of their portions. A family may buy a number of shares for the whole term before the

distribution takes place, and receive all the shares in one lot. In consequence of this practice there are still a number of members who are practically landless; but they have no ground for complaint, for they voluntarily sold their right, and they will be duly reinstated at the next general redistribution.

For the student of social development, the past history and actual condition of the Don Cossacks present much that is interesting and instructive. He may there see, for instance, how an aristocracy can be created by military promotion, and how serfage may originate and become a recognised institution without any legislative enactment. If he takes an interest in peculiar manifestations of religious thought and feeling, he will find a rich field of investigation in the countless religious sects; and if he is a collector of quaint old customs, he will not lack occupation.

One curious custom, which has very recently died out, I may here mention by way of illustration. As the Cossacks knew very little about land-surveying, and still less about land-registration, the precise boundary between two contiguous "yoorts" — as the communal land of a stanitsa was called — was often a matter of uncertainty and a fruitful source of disputes. When the boundary was once determined, the following original method of registering it was employed. All the boys of the two stanitsas were collected and driven in a body like sheep to the intervening frontier. The whole population then walked along the frontier that had been agreed upon, and at each landmark a number of boys were soundly

whipped and allowed to run home! This was done in the hope that the victims would remember, as long as they lived, the spot where they had received their unmerited castigation. The device, I have been assured, was generally very effective, but it was not always quite successful.[1] Whether from the castigation not being always sufficiently severe, or from some other defect in the method, it sometimes happened that disputes afterwards arose, and the whipped boys, now grown up to manhood, gave conflicting testimony. When such a case occurred the following expedient was adopted. One of the oldest inhabitants was chosen as arbiter, and made to swear on the Scriptures that he would act honestly to the best of his knowledge; then, taking an Icon in his hand, he walked along what he believed to be the old frontier. Whether he made mistakes or not, his decision was accepted by both parties and regarded as final. This custom existed in some stanitsas down to the year 1850, when the boundaries were clearly determined by Government officials.

[1] "Beating the bounds" in London, a practice which was carried on once a year until quite recently, was a very similar operation to this and perhaps a survival of its exact counterpart. The London ceremonial consisted in beating the old stone boundary marks with sticks or wands carried by the boys of the parish themselves. — C. W.

CHAPTER VIII

FOREIGN COLONISTS ON THE STEPPE

IN European Russia the struggle between agriculture and nomadic barbarism is now a thing of the past, and the fertile Steppe, which was for centuries a battle-ground of the Aryan and Turanian races, has been incorporated into the dominions of the Tsar. The nomadic races have been partly driven out and partly pacified and parked in "reserves," and the territory which they so long and so stubbornly defended is now studded with peaceful villages and tilled by laborious agriculturists.

In traversing this region the ordinary tourist will find little to interest him. He will see nothing which he can possibly dignify by the name of scenery, and he may journey on for many days without having any occasion to make an entry in his note-book. If he should happen, however, to be an ethnologist and linguist, he may find occupation, for he will here meet with fragments of very many different races and a variety of foreign tongues sufficient to test the polyglot acquirements of a Mezzofanti.

The official statistics of New Russia alone — that is to say, the provinces of Ekaterinosláf, Tauride,

Kherson, and Bessarabia — enumerate the following nationalities: Great-Russians, Little-Russians, Poles, Servians, Montenegrins, Bulgarians, Moldavians, Germans, English, Swedes, Swiss, French, Italians, Greeks, Armenians, Tartars, Mordwá, Jews, and Gypsies. The religions are almost equally numerous. The statistics speak of Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Gregorians, Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, Menonites, Separatists, Pietists, Karaïm Jews, Talmudists, Mahometans, and numerous Russian sects, such as the Molokáni and the Skoptsi or Eunuchs.

It is but fair to state that the above list, though literally correct, does not give a true idea of the actual population. The great body of the inhabitants are Russian and Orthodox, whilst several of the nationalities named are represented by a small number of souls — some of them, such as the French, being found exclusively in the towns. Still, the variety even in the rural population is very great. Once, in the space of three days and using only the most primitive means of conveyance, I visited colonies of Greeks, Germans, Servians, Bulgarians, Montenegrins, and Jews.

Of all the foreign colonists the Germans are by far the most numerous. The object of the Government in inviting them to settle in the country was that they should till the unoccupied land and thereby increase the national wealth, and that they should at the same time exercise a civilising influence on the Russian peasantry in their vicinity. In this latter

respect they have totally failed to fulfil their mission. A Russian village, situated in the midst of German colonies, shows generally, so far as I could observe, no signs of German influence. Each nationality lives *more majorum*, and holds as little communication as possible with the other. The *muzhík* observes carefully — for he is very curious — the mode of life of his more advanced neighbours, but he never thinks of adopting it. He looks upon Germans almost as beings of a different world — as a wonderfully cunning and ingenious people, who have been endowed by Providence with peculiar qualities not possessed by ordinary Orthodox humanity. To him it seems in the nature of things that Germans should live in large, clean, well-built houses, in the same way as it is in the nature of things that birds should build nests; and as it has probably never occurred to a human being to build a nest for himself and his family, so it never occurs to a Russian peasant to build a house on the German model. Germans are Germans, and Russians are Russians — and there is nothing more to be said on the subject.

This stubbornly conservative spirit of the peasantry who live in the neighbourhood of Germans seems to give the lie direct to the oft-repeated and universally-believed assertion that Russians are an imitative people strongly disposed to adopt the manners and customs of any foreigners with whom they may come in contact. The Russian, it is said, changes his nationality as easily as he changes his coat, and derives great satisfaction from wearing some nation-

ality that does not belong to him; but here we have an important fact which appears to prove the contrary.

The truth is that in this matter we must distinguish between the noblesse and the peasantry. The nobles are singularly prone to adopt foreign manners, customs, and institutions; the peasants, on the contrary, are as a rule decidedly conservative. It must not, however, be supposed that this proceeds from a difference of race; the difference is to be explained by the past history of the two classes. Like all other peoples, the Russians are strongly conservative so long as they remain in what may be termed their primitive moral habitat — that is to say, so long as external circumstances do not force them out of their accustomed, traditional groove. The noblesse were long ago violently forced out of their old groove by the reforming Tsars, and since that time they have been so constantly driven hither and thither by foreign influences that they have never been able to form a new one. Thus they easily enter upon any new path which seems to them profitable or attractive. The great mass of the people, on the contrary, were too heavy to be thus lifted out of the guiding influence of custom and tradition, and are therefore still animated with a strongly conservative spirit.

In confirmation of this view I may mention two facts which have often attracted my attention. The first of these is that the Molokáni, of whom I have frequently spoken, succumb gradually to German

influence; by becoming heretics in religion they free themselves from one of the strongest bonds attaching them to the past, and soon become heretics in things secular. The second fact is that even the Orthodox peasant, when placed by circumstances in some new sphere of activity, readily adopts whatever seems profitable. Take, for example, the peasants who abandon agriculture and embark in industrial enterprises; finding themselves, as it were, in a new world, in which their old traditional notions are totally inapplicable, they have no hesitation in adopting foreign ideas and foreign inventions. And when once they have chosen this new path, they are much more "go-ahead" than the Germans. Freed alike from the trammels of hereditary conceptions and from the prudence which experience generates, they often give a loose rein to their impulsive character, and enter freely on the wildest speculations.

The marked contrast presented by a German colony and a Russian village in close proximity with each other is often used to illustrate the superiority of the Teutonic over the Slavonic race, and in order to make the contrast more striking, the Menonite colonies are generally taken as the representative of the Germans. Without entering here on the general question, I must say that this method of argumentation is scarcely fair. The Menonites, who formerly lived in the neighbourhood of Danzig and emigrated from Prussia in order to escape the military conscription, brought with them to their new home a large store of useful technical knowledge

and a considerable amount of capital, and they received a quantity of land very much greater than the Russian peasants possess. Besides this, they enjoyed until very recently several valuable privileges. They were entirely exempted from military service and almost entirely exempted from taxation. Altogether their lines have fallen in very pleasant places. In material and moral well-being they stand as far above the majority of the ordinary German colonists as these latter do above their Russian neighbours. Even in the richest districts of Germany their prosperity would attract attention. To compare these rich, privileged, well-educated farmers with the poor, heavily-taxed, uneducated peasantry, and to draw from the comparison conclusions concerning the capabilities of the two races, is a proceeding so palpably absurd that it requires no further comment.

To the wearied traveller who has been living for some time in Russian villages one of these Menonite colonies seems an earthly paradise. In a little hollow, perhaps by the side of a water-course, he suddenly comes on a long row of high-roofed houses half concealed in trees. The trees will be found on closer inspection to be little better than mere saplings; but after a long journey on the bare Steppe, where there is neither tree nor bush of any kind, the foliage, scant as it is, appears singularly inviting. The houses are large, well arranged, and kept in such thoroughly good repair that they always appear to be newly built. The rooms are plainly furnished,

without any pretensions to elegance, but scrupulously clean. Adjoining the house are the stable and byre, which would not disgrace a model farm in Germany or England. In front is a spacious courtyard, which has the appearance of being swept several times a day, and behind there is a garden well stocked with vegetables. Fruit trees and flowers are not very plentiful, for the climate is not favourable to their cultivation. The inhabitants are plain, honest, frugal people, somewhat sluggish of intellect and indifferent to things lying beyond the narrow limits of their own little world, but shrewd enough in all matters which they deem worthy of their attention. If you arrive amongst them as a stranger you may be a little chilled by the welcome you receive, for they are exclusive, reserved, and distrustful, and do not much like to associate with those who do not belong to their own sect; but if you can converse with them in their mother tongue and talk about religious matters in an evangelical tone, you may easily overcome their stiffness and exclusiveness. Altogether such a village cannot be recommended for a lengthened sojourn, for the severe order and symmetry which everywhere prevail would soon prove intolerable to any one having no Dutch blood in his veins; [1] but as a temporary resting-place during a pilgrimage on the Steppe, when the pilgrim is longing for a little cleanliness and comfort, it is very agreeable.

[1] The Menonites were originally Dutchmen. They emigrated to Russia some time in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, and have since forgotten their native language, but they have retained, among other characteristics, their love of order and symmetry.

Perhaps, therefore, in calling it a little earthly paradise, I ought to have added — for Dutchmen.

The fact that these Menonites and some other German colonies have succeeded in rearing a few sickly trees has suggested to some fertile minds the idea that the prevailing dryness of the climate, which is the chief difficulty with which the agriculturist of that region has to contend, might be to some extent counteracted by arboriculture on a large scale. This scheme, though it has been seriously entertained by one of his Majesty's ministers, must seem eminently impracticable to any one who knows how much labour and money the colonists have expended in creating that agreeable shade which they love to enjoy in their leisure hours. If climate is affected at all by the existence or non-existence of forests — a point on which scientific men do not seem to be entirely agreed — any palpable increase of the rainfall can be produced only by forests of enormous extent, and it is absurd to imagine that these could be artificially produced in Southern Russia.

After the Menonites and other Germans, the Bulgarian colonists deserve a passing notice. They settled in this region only a few years ago on the land that was left vacant by the exodus of the Nogai Tartars after the Crimean War. Their villages have, therefore, still a bare, unfinished appearance, but the people seem to be already prospering. If I may judge of their condition by a mere flying visit, I should say that in agriculture and domestic civilisation they are not very far behind the major-

ity of German colonists. Their houses are indeed small — so small that one of them might almost be put into a single room of a Menonite's house; but there is an air of cleanliness and comfort about them that would do credit to a German housewife. In spite of all this, these Bulgarians were, I could easily perceive, by no means delighted with their new home. The cause of their discontent, so far as I could gather from the few laconic remarks which I extracted from them, seemed to be this. Trusting to the highly-coloured descriptions furnished by the emigration agents who had induced them to change the rule of the Sultan for the authority of the Tsar, they came to Russia with the expectation of finding there a fertile and beautiful Promised Land. Instead of a land flowing with milk and honey, they received a tract of bare steppe on which even water could be obtained only with great difficulty — with no shade to protect them from the heat of summer and nothing to shelter them from the keen northern blasts that often sweep over those open plains. As no adequate arrangements had been made for their reception, they were quartered during the first winter on the German colonists, who, being quite innocent of any Slavophil sympathies, were probably not very hospitable to their uninvited guests. To complete their disappointment, they found that they could not cultivate the vine, and that their mild, fragrant tobacco, which is for them a necessary of life, could not be obtained but at a very high

price. So disconsolate were they under this cruel disenchantment that, at the time of my visit, they talked of returning to their old homes in Turkey. Whether their views on this subject have been altered by recent events in their own country I have no means of ascertaining.

As an example of the less prosperous colonists, I may mention the Tartar-speaking Greeks in the neighbourhood of Mariúpol, on the northern shore of the Sea of Azof. Their ancestors lived in the Crimea, under the rule of the Tartar Khans, and emigrated to Russia in the time of Catherine II., before Crim Tartary was annexed to the Russian Empire. They have almost entirely forgotten their old language, but have preserved their old faith. In adopting the Tartar language they have adopted something of Tartar indolence and apathy, and the natural consequence is that they are poor and ignorant. They seemed to me to have a most striking resemblance to the so-called Tartars of the Crimea, and from this I am inclined to believe that these latter are, properly speaking, not Tartars at all, but Hellenes who adopted the language and the religion of their conquerors.

But of all the colonists of this region the least prosperous are the Jews. The Chosen People are certainly a most intelligent, industrious, frugal race, and in all matters of buying, selling, and bartering they are unrivalled among the nations of the earth, but they have been too long accustomed to town life to be good tillers of the soil. These Jewish col-

onies were founded as an experiment to see whether the Israelite could be weaned from his traditionary pursuits and transferred to what some economists call the productive section of society. The experiment has failed, and the cause of the failure is not difficult to find. One has merely to look at these men of gaunt visage and shambling gait, with their loop-holed slippers, and black, threadbare coats reaching down to their ankles, to understand that they are not in their proper sphere. Their houses are in a most dilapidated condition, and their villages remind one of the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet. A great part of their land is left uncultivated or let to colonists of a different race. What little revenue they have is derived chiefly from trade of a more or less clandestine nature.

As Scandinavia was formerly called *officina gentium* — a workshop in which new nations were made — so we may regard Southern Russia as a workshop in which fragments of old nations are being melted down to form a new, composite whole. It must be confessed, however, that the melting process has as yet scarcely begun.

National peculiarities are not obliterated so rapidly in Russia as in America or in British colonies. In the United States I have often seen Germans who had been but a few years in the country trying hard to be more American than the natives, ludicrously exaggerating American peculiarities of manner, speaking a barbarous jargon which they

supposed to be English in preference to their mother tongue, boisterously expressing their admiration of American institutions, and ready to resent as an insult any doubt as to their being genuine citizens of the Great Republic. Among the German colonists in Russia I have never seen anything of this kind. Though their fathers and grandfathers may have been born in the new country, they would consider it an insult to be called Russians. They look down upon the Russian peasantry as poor, ignorant, lazy, and dishonest, fear the officials on account of their tyranny and extortion, preserve jealously their own language and customs, rarely speak Russian well — sometimes not at all — and never intermarry with those from whom they are separated by nationality and religion. The Russian influence acts, however, more rapidly on the Slavonic colonists — Servians, Bulgarians, Montenegrins — who profess the Greek Orthodox faith, learn more easily the Russian language, which is closely allied to their own, have no consciousness of belonging to a Culturvolk, and in general possess a nature much more pliable than the Teutonic.

As an instance of the ethnological curiosities which the traveller may stumble upon unawares in this curious region, I may mention a strange acquaintance I made when travelling on the great plain which stretches from the Sea of Azof to the Caspian. One day I accidentally noticed on my travelling map the name "Shotlándskaya Kolóniya" (Scottish Colony) near the celebrated baths of Piatigorsk. I was at

that moment in Stávropol, a town about eighty miles to the north, and could not gain any satisfactory information as to what this colony was. Some well-informed people assured me that it really was what its name implied, whilst others asserted as confidently that it was simply a small German settlement. To decide the matter I determined to visit the place myself, though it did not lie in my intended route, and I accordingly found myself one morning in the village in question. The first inhabitants whom I encountered were unmistakably German, and they professed to know nothing about the existence of Scotchmen in the locality either at the present or in former times. This was disappointing, and I was about to turn away and drive off when a young man, who proved to be the schoolmaster, came up, and on hearing what I desired, advised me to consult an old Circassian who lived at the end of the village and was well acquainted with local antiquities. On proceeding to the house indicated, I found a venerable old man, with fine regular features of the Circassian type, coal-black sparkling eyes, and a long grey beard that would have done honour to a patriarch. To him I explained briefly, in Russian, the object of my visit, and asked whether he knew of any Scotchmen in the district.

"And why do you wish to know?" he replied, in the same language, fixing me with his keen, sparkling eyes.

"Because I am myself a Scotchman, and hoped to find fellow-countrymen here."

Let the reader imagine my astonishment when, in reply to this, he answered, in genuine broad Scotch, "Od, man, I'm a Scotchman tae! My name is John Abercrombie. Did ye never hear tell o' John Abercrombie, the famous Edinburgh doctor?"

I was fairly puzzled by this extraordinary declaration. Dr. Abercrombie's name was familiar to me as that of a medical practitioner and writer on psychology, but I knew that he was long since dead. When I had recovered a little from my surprise, I ventured to remark to the enigmatical personage before me that, though his tongue was certainly Scotch, his face was as certainly Circassian.

"Weel, weel," he replied, evidently enjoying my look of mystification, "you're no' far wrang. I'm a Circassian Scotchman!"

This extraordinary admission did not diminish my perplexity, so I begged my new acquaintance to be a little more explicit, and he at once complied with my request. His long story may be told in a few words:

In the first years of the present century a band of Scotch missionaries came to Russia for the purpose of converting the Circassian tribes, and received from the Emperor Alexander I. a large grant of land in this place, which was then on the frontier of the Empire. Here they founded a mission, and began the work; but they soon discovered that the surrounding population were not idolaters, but Mussulmans, and consequently impervious to Christianity. In this difficulty they fell on the happy idea of buying

Circassian children from their parents, and bringing them up as Christians. One of these children, purchased about the year 1806, was a little boy called Teoona. As he had been purchased with money subscribed by Dr. Abercrombie, he had received in baptism that gentleman's name, and he considered himself the foster-son of his benefactor. Here was the explanation of the mystery.

Teoona, *alias* Mr. Abercrombie, was a man of more than average intelligence. Besides his native tongue, he spoke English, German, and Russian perfectly; and he assured me that he knew several other languages equally well. His life had been devoted to missionary work, and especially to translating and printing the Scriptures. He had laboured first in Astrakhan, then for four years and a half in Persia — in the service of the Bâle mission — and afterwards for six years in Siberia.

The Scottish mission was suppressed by the Emperor Nicholas about the year 1835, and all the missionaries except two returned home. The son of one of these two (Galloway) is the only genuine Scotchman remaining. Of the "Circassian Scotchmen" there are several, most of whom have married Germans. The other inhabitants are German colonists from the province of Sarátof, and German is the language commonly spoken in the village.

CHAPTER IX

ST. PETERSBURG AND EUROPEAN INFLUENCE

FROM whatever side the traveller approaches St. Petersburg, unless he goes thither by sea, he must traverse several hundred miles of forest and morass, presenting few traces of human habitation or agriculture. This fact adds powerfully to the first impression which the city makes on his mind. In the midst of a waste howling wilderness, he suddenly comes on a magnificent artificial oasis.

Of all the great European cities the one which most resembles the capital of the Tsars is Berlin. Both are built on perfectly level ground; both have wide, regularly-arranged, badly-paved streets; in both there is a general look of stiffness and symmetry which suggests military discipline and German bureaucracy. But there is at least one profound difference. Though Berlin is said by geographers to be built on the Spree, we might live a long time in the city without ever noticing the sluggish, dirty little stream on which the name of a river has been undeservedly conferred. St. Petersburg, on the contrary, is built on a magnificent river, which forms the main feature of the place. By its breadth,

and by the enormous volume of its clear blue cold water, the Neva is certainly one of the noblest rivers in Europe. A few miles before reaching the Gulf of Finland it breaks up into several streams and forms a delta. It is here that St. Petersburg stands. The principal part of the town is built on the southern bank; the remainder is scattered over the northern bank and the islands. The chief of these is Basil Island, or Vassiliostrof, connected with the southern bank by a long stone bridge, remarkable for the beauty of its outline. This is one of the two great stone bridges of which the city can boast, but there are numerous wooden ones — some supported by piles, and others by boats like the well-known floating bridges on the Rhine — which connect the islands with each other and with the mainland. At many intermediate points the communication is kept up in summer by picturesque, little two-oared ferry-boats, built, it is said, on a model designed by Peter the Great. Some of the more distant parts of the town may be conveniently reached by means of the active little steam-launches, which dart about, and add to the animation of the scene. In winter these ferry-boats and launches disappear, and the bridges lose much of their importance, for the river is covered throughout its whole extent by a thick firm layer of ice, strong enough to support the heaviest burdens. Then disappear, too, the rattling, jolting little *droskies* — a vehicle which stands midway between a cab and an instrument of torture — and are replaced by the sledges, which

glide along smoothly and noiselessly like a boat in calm water.

The main stream, or "Big Neva," spanned by the stone bridge and by three bridges of boats, flows between the city properly so called and Vassiliostrof, and is kept within proper bounds by quays and embankments solidly built and faced with massive blocks of red granite. On the southern side the embankment is used as a street or promenade. The quays of Vassiliostrof, on the contrary, are employed for commercial purposes, and are always lined during the summer months by a goodly array of shipping. At the eastern extremity of the island stand the Custom-house and the Exchange, and here the foreign merchants, who monopolise the export and import trade, most do congregate. The quarter is not, however, exclusively mercantile, for it contains also the Academy of Science, the University, and the Academy of the Fine Arts. On the neighbouring island, higher up the river, stands the fortress, a picturesque structure, used as the burying-place of the Imperial family and as a State prison. On the opposite bank stand the Imperial palace, the Admiralty, the Senate, and, further down, the naval dockyards; and high over all, towers the majestic gilded dome of St. Isaac's.

Like the river, everything in St. Petersburg is on a colossal scale. The streets, the squares, the palaces, the public buildings, the churches, whatever may be their defects, have at least the attribute of greatness, and seem to have been designed for the countless

generations to come, rather than for the practical wants of the present inhabitants. In this respect the city well represents the Empire of which it is the capital. Even the private houses are built in enormous blocks, many of them containing more than a score of separate apartments.

This custom of building big houses has rendered possible a peculiar and effective system of police organisation. Each house has a *dvornik*, or porter, who is a servant of the proprietor and at the same time a police agent. He has to sweep, and in summer to water, the street in front of the house, and to see that all the inmates observe scrupulously the passport regulations. At night he has to remain outside in the street and act as watchman. The fact that these men commonly lie down and go to sleep during the long winter nights, when the thermometer may sink to thirty degrees below zero, and that they are rarely if ever frozen to death, constitutes a brilliant proof of the Russian's wonderful capacity for resisting extreme cold. Formerly, it is said, these watchmen often aided the police in waylaying and robbing benighted citizens; but all such practices have become things of the past, and the police of St. Petersburg may now challenge comparison with those of the other European capitals.

St. Petersburg has, of course, its "lions," which every tourist is expected to visit and admire. There is, for instance, St. Isaac's Cathedral, an enormous building in Renaissance style, with gilded dome and

gigantic monolithic pillars of red granite. The general effect of the exterior, especially when covered with a layer of sparkling hoar-frost, is very fine; but the interior has been spoiled by rich, gaudy decorations, which might supply admirable illustrations for a sermon on pretentious vulgarity and bad taste. A much less successful architectural effort is the Kazan Church, which is often praised by Russians as the work of a native artist, but which is in reality a striking illustration of that spirit of thoughtless imitation which is too often to be found in Russian institutions. The gigantic, semicircular colonnade, suggested by that of St. Peter's at Rome, is so utterly out of proportion with the rest of the structure that it completely hides the body of the church, while the dome peeps over the formidable barrier like a culprit condemned to imprisonment for life and apathetically resigned to his fate. Then there is the Winter Palace, which finds favour in the eyes of those who believe in the transcendent genius of Rastrelli, but which is completely wanting in the stern, massive grandeur which the name suggests. Some of the minor palaces are much more in keeping with the nature of the climate, but they present nothing that can be called a Russian style of architecture. There is a Russian style, but it is suitable only for wooden buildings. In their stone buildings the Russians have, like the other Northern nations, borrowed largely from the countries of Southern Europe without considering the difference of climate. What the Petersburgians may be justly proud of is

the general grandiose appearance of their city, and not the beauty of particular edifices.

Of statues and other monuments there is a goodly quantity, displaying all degrees of merit, from the equestrian statue of Peter the Great, which is really a work of art, to the statues and busts in the Summer Garden, which are simply artistic monstrosities. Pictures, too, there are in abundance. The Hermitage, for instance, contains a really magnificent collection of the Dutch school, and a large number of works attributed to Italian and Spanish old masters — all more or less genuine. But I need not trespass on the domain of the art critic, nor need I weary the reader with descriptions of what has already been described in the guide-books. In St. Petersburg, as elsewhere, sight-seeing is a weariness of the flesh; and the tourist may employ his time much more agreeably in sauntering about the streets and bazaars, especially if it be in winter time, when St. Petersburg wears its national costume.

There is, however, one "sight" which must have a deep interest for those who are sensitive to the influence of historical associations — I mean the little wooden house in which Peter the Great lived whilst his future capital was being built. In its style and arrangement it looks more like the hut of a navvy than the residence of a Tsar, but it was quite in keeping with the character of the illustrious man who occupied it. Peter could and did occasionally work like a navvy without feeling that his Imperial dignity was thereby diminished. When he deter-

mined to build a new capital on a Finnish marsh, inhabited chiefly by wildfowl, he did not content himself with exercising his autocratic power in a comfortable arm-chair. Like the old Greek gods, he went down from his Olympus, and took his place in the ranks of ordinary mortals, superintending the work with his own eyes, and taking part in it with his own hands. If he was as arbitrary and oppressive as any of the pyramid-building Pharaohs, he could at least say in self-justification that he did not spare himself any more than his people, but exposed himself freely to the discomforts and dangers under which thousands of his fellow-labourers succumbed.

In reading the account of Peter's life, written in part by his own pen, we can easily understand how the piously Conservative section of his subjects failed to recognise in him the legitimate successor of the orthodox Tsars. The old Tsars had been men of grave, pompous demeanour, and deeply imbued with the consciousness of their semi-religious dignity. Living habitually in Moscow or its immediate neighbourhood, they spent their time in attending long religious services, in consulting with their Boyars, in being present at ceremonious hunting-parties, in visiting the monasteries, and in holding edifying conversations with ecclesiastical dignitaries or revered ascetics. If they undertook a journey, it was probably to make a pilgrimage to some holy shrine; and, whether in Moscow or elsewhere, they were always protected from contact with ordinary human-

ity by a formidable barricade of court ceremonial. In short, they combined the characters of a Christian monk and of an Oriental potentate.

Peter was a man of an entirely different stamp, and played in the calm, dignified, orthodox, ceremonial world of Moscow the part of the bull in the china shop, outraging ruthlessly and wantonly all the time-honoured traditional conceptions of propriety and etiquette. Utterly regardless of public opinion and popular prejudices, he swept away the old formalities, avoided ceremonies of all kinds, scoffed at ancient usage, preferred foreign secular books to edifying conversations, chose profane heretics as his boon companions, travelled in foreign countries, dressed in heretical costume, defaced the image of God and put his soul in jeopardy by shaving off his beard, compelled his nobles to dress and shave like himself, rushed about the Empire as if goaded on by the demon of unrest, employed his sacred hands in carpentering and other menial occupations, took part openly in the uproarious orgies of his foreign soldiery, and, in short, did everything that "the Lord's anointed" might reasonably be expected not to do. No wonder the Moscovites were scandalised by his conduct, and that some of them suspected he was not the Tsar at all, but Antichrist in disguise. And no wonder he felt the atmosphere of Moscow oppressive, and preferred living in the new capital which he had himself created.

His avowed object in building St. Petersburg was to have "a window by which the Russians might

look into civilised Europe;" and well has the city fulfilled its purpose. From its foundation may be dated the European period of Russian history. Before Peter's time Russia belonged to Asia rather than to Europe, and was doubtless regarded by Englishmen and Frenchmen pretty much as we nowadays regard Bokhara or Kashgar; since that time she has formed an integral part of the European political system, and her intellectual history has been but a reflection of the intellectual history of Western Europe, modified and coloured by national character and by peculiar local conditions.

When we speak of the intellectual history of a nation we generally mean in reality the intellectual history of the upper classes. With regard to Russia, more perhaps than with regard to any other country, this distinction must always carefully be borne in mind. Peter succeeded in forcing European civilisation on the nobles, but the people remained unaffected. Thus the nation was, as it were, cleft in two, and with each succeeding generation the cleft has widened. Whilst the masses clung obstinately to their time-honoured customs and beliefs, the nobles came to look on the objects of popular veneration as the relics of a barbarous past, of which a civilised nation ought to be ashamed.

The intellectual movement inaugurated by Peter had a purely practical character. He was himself a thorough utilitarian, and perceived clearly that what his people needed was not theological or philosophical enlightenment, but plain practical knowledge suitable

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for the requirements of everyday life. He wanted neither theologians nor philosophers, but military and naval officers, administrators, artisans, miners, manufacturers, and merchants, and for this purpose he introduced secular technical education. For the young generation primary schools were founded, and for more advanced pupils the best foreign works on fortification, architecture, navigation, metallurgy, engineering, and cognate subjects, were translated into the native tongue. Scientific men and cunning artificers were brought into the country, and young Russians were sent abroad to learn foreign languages and the useful arts. In a word, everything was done that seemed likely to raise the Russians to the level of material well-being already attained by the more advanced nations.

We have here an important peculiarity in the intellectual development of Russia. In Western Europe the modern scientific spirit, being the natural offspring of numerous concomitant historical causes, was born in the natural way, and Society had, consequently, before giving birth to it, to endure the pains of pregnancy and the throes of prolonged labour. In Russia, on the contrary, this spirit appeared suddenly as an adult foreigner, adopted by a despotic paterfamilias. Thus Russia made the transition from mediæval to modern times without any violent struggle between the old and the new conceptions, such as had taken place in the West. The Church, effectually restrained from all active opposition by the Imperial power, preserved

unmodified her ancient beliefs, whilst the nobles, casting their traditional conceptions and beliefs to the winds, marched forward unfettered on that path which their fathers and grandfathers had regarded as the direct road to perdition.

During the first part of Peter's reign Russia was not subjected to the exclusive influence of any one particular country. Thoroughly cosmopolitan in his sympathies, the great reformer was ready to borrow from any foreign nation — German, Dutch, Danish, or French — whatever seemed to him to suit his purpose. But soon the geographical proximity to Germany, the annexation of the Baltic Provinces in which the civilisation was German, and intermarriages between the Imperial family and various German dynasties, gave to German influence a decided preponderance. When the Empress Anne, Peter's niece, who had been Duchess of Courland, entrusted the whole administration of the country to her favourite Biron, the German influence became almost exclusive, and the court, the official world, and the schools were Germanised.

The harsh, cruel, tyrannical rule of Biron produced a strong reaction, ending in a revolution, which raised to the throne the Princess Elizabeth, Peter's unmarried daughter, who had lived in retirement and neglect during the German régime. She was expected to rid the country of foreigners, and she did what she could to fulfil the expectations that were entertained of her. With loud protestations of patriotic feelings, she removed the Germans from all

important posts, demanded that in future the members of the Academy should be chosen from among born Russians, and gave orders that the Russian youth should be carefully prepared for all kinds of official activity.

This attempt to throw off the German bondage did not lead to intellectual independence. During Peter's violent reforms Russia had ruthlessly thrown away her own historic past with whatever germs it contained, and now she possessed none of the elements of a genuine national culture. She was in the position of a fugitive who has escaped from slavery, and, finding himself in danger of starvation, looks out for a new master. The upper classes, who had acquired a taste for foreign civilisation, no sooner threw off everything German than they sought some other civilisation to put in its place. And they could not long hesitate in making a choice, for at that time all who thought of culture and refinement turned their eyes to Paris and Versailles. All that was most brilliant and refined was to be found at the Court of the French kings, under whose patronage the art and literature of the Renaissance had attained their highest development. Even Germany, which had resisted the ambitious designs of Louis XIV., imitated the manners of his Court. Every petty German potentate strove to ape the pomp and dignity of the Grand Monarque; and the courtiers, affecting to look on everything German as rude and barbarous, adopted French fashions, and spoke a hybrid jargon which they considered much

more elegant than the plain mother tongue. In a word, Gallomania had become the prevailing social epidemic of the time, and it could not fail to attack severely and metamorphose completely such a class as the Russian noblesse, which possessed few stubborn, deep-rooted national convictions.

At first the French influence was manifested chiefly in external forms — that is to say, in dress, manners, language, and upholstery — but gradually, and very rapidly after the accession of Catherine II., the friend of Voltaire and the Encyclopædists, it sunk deeper. Every noble who had pretensions to being "civilised" learned to speak French fluently, and gained some superficial acquaintance with French literature. The tragedies of Corneille and Racine and the comedies of Molière were played regularly at the Court theatre in presence of the Empress, and awakened a real or affected enthusiasm among the audience. For those who preferred reading in their native language, numerous translations were published, a simple list of which would fill several pages. Among them we find not only Voltaire, Rousseau, Lesage, Marmontel, and other favourite French authors, but also all the masterpieces of European literature, ancient and modern, which at that time enjoyed a high reputation in the French literary world — Homer and Demosthenes, Cicero and Virgil, Ariosto and Camoens, Milton and Locke, Sterne and Fielding.

It is related of Byron that he never wrote a description whilst the scene was actually before him; and this fact points to an important psychological

principle. The human mind, so long as it is compelled to strain the receptive faculties, cannot engage in that "poetic" activity — to use the term in its Greek sense — which is commonly called "original creation." And as with individuals, so with nations. By accepting in a lump a foreign culture a nation inevitably condemns itself for a time to intellectual sterility. So long as it is occupied in receiving and assimilating a flood of new ideas, unfamiliar conceptions, and foreign modes of thought, it will produce nothing original, and the result of its highest efforts will be merely successful imitation. We need not be surprised therefore to find that the Russians, in becoming acquainted with foreign literature, became imitators and plagiarists. In this kind of work their natural pliancy of mind and powerful histrionic talent made them wonderfully successful. Odes, pseudo-classical tragedies, satirical comedies, epic poems, elegies, and all the other recognised forms of poetical composition, appeared in great profusion, and many of the writers acquired a remarkable command over their native language, which had hitherto been regarded as uncouth and barbarous. But in all this mass of imitative literature, which has since fallen into well-merited oblivion, there are very few traces of genuine originality. To obtain the title of the Russian Racine, the Russian Lafontaine, the Russian Pindar, or the Russian Homer, was at that time the highest aim of Russian literary ambition.

Together with the fashionable literature the Rus-

sian educated classes adopted something of the fashionable philosophy. They were peculiarly unfitted to resist that hurricane of "enlightenment" which swept over Europe during the latter half of last century, first breaking or uprooting the received philosophical systems, theological conceptions, and scientific theories, and then shaking to their foundations the existing political and social institutions. The Russian noblesse had neither the traditional conservative spirit, nor the firm, well-reasoned, logical beliefs which in England and Germany formed a powerful barrier against the spread of French influence. They had been too recently metamorphosed, and were too eager to acquire a foreign civilisation, to have even the germs of a conservative spirit. The rapidity and violence with which Peter's reforms had been effected, together with the peculiar spirit of Greek Orthodoxy and the low intellectual level of the clergy, had prevented theology from associating itself with the new order of things. The upper classes had become estranged from the beliefs of their forefathers without acquiring other beliefs to supply the place of those which had been lost. The old religious conceptions were inseparably interwoven with what was recognised as antiquated and barbarous, whilst the new philosophical ideas were associated with all that was modern and civilised. Besides this, the sovereign who at that time ruled the country and enjoyed the unbounded admiration of the upper classes, openly professed allegiance to the new philosophy, and

sought the advice and friendship of its High Priests. If we bear in mind these facts we shall not be surprised to find among the Russian nobles of that time a considerable number of so-called "Voltairians" and numerous unquestioning believers in the infallibility of the Encyclopédie. What is a little more surprising is, that the new philosophy sometimes found its way into the ecclesiastical seminaries. The famous Speranski relates that in the seminary of St. Petersburg, one of his professors, when not in a state of intoxication, was in the habit of preaching the doctrines of Voltaire and Diderot!

The rise of the sentimental school in Western Europe produced an important change in Russian literature by undermining the inordinate admiration for the French pseudo-classical school. Florian, Richardson, Sterne, Rousseau, and Bernardin de St. Pierre found first translators, and then imitators, and soon the loud-sounding declamation and wordy ecstatic despair of the stage heroes were drowned in the deep-drawn sighs and plaintive wailings of amorous swains and peasant-maids forsaken. The mania seems to have been in Russia even more severe than in the countries where it originated. Full-grown, bearded men wept because they had not been born in peaceful primitive times, "when all men were shepherds and brothers." Hundreds of sighing youths and maidens visited the scenes described by the sentimental writers, and wandered by the rivers and ponds in which despairing heroines had drowned themselves. People talked, wrote, and

meditated about "the sympathy of hearts created for each other," "the soft communion of sympathetic souls," and much more of the same kind. Sentimental journeys became a favourite amusement, and formed the subject of very popular books, containing maudlin absurdities likely to produce nowadays mirth rather than tears. One traveller, for instance, throws himself on his knees before an old oak and makes a speech to it; another weeps daily on the grave of a favourite dog, and constantly longs to marry a peasant-girl; a third talks love to the moon, send kisses to the stars, and wishes to press the heavenly orbs to his bosom! For a time the public would read nothing but absurd productions of this sort, and Karamzín, the great literary authority of the time, expressly declared that the true function of Art was "to disseminate agreeable impressions in the region of the sentimental."

The love of French philosophy vanished as suddenly as the inordinate admiration of the French pseudo-classical literature. When the great Revolution broke out in Paris, the fashionable philosophic literature in St. Petersburg disappeared. Men who talked about political freedom and the rights of man, without thinking for a moment of limiting the autocratic power or of emancipating their serfs, were naturally surprised and frightened on discovering what the liberal principles could effect when applied to real life. Horrified by the awful scenes of the Terror, they hastened to divest themselves of the principles which led to such results, and sunk into

a kind of optimistic conservatism that harmonised well with the virtuous sentimentalism in vogue. In this the Empress herself gave the example. The Imperial disciple and friend of the Encyclopædists became in the last years of her reign a decided *réactionnaire.*

During the Napoleonic wars, when the patriotic feelings were excited, there was a violent hostility to foreign intellectual influence; and feeble intermittent attempts were made to throw off the intellectual bondage. The invasion of the country in 1812 by the Grande Armée, and the burning of Moscow, added abundant fuel to this patriotic fire. For some time any one who ventured to express even a moderate admiration for French culture incurred the risk of being stigmatised as a traitor to his country and a renegade to the national faith. But this patriotic fanaticism soon evaporated, and the exaggerations of the ultra-national party became the object of satire and parody. When the political danger was past, and people resumed their ordinary occupations, those who loved foreign literature returned to their old favourites — or, as the ultra-patriots called it, to their "wallowing in the mire" — simply because the native literature did not supply them with what they desired. "We are quite ready," they said to their upbraiders, "to admire your great works as soon as they appear, but in the meantime please allow us to enjoy what we possess." Thus the patriotic opposition gradually ceased, and a new period of unrestricted intellectual importation began.

The intellectual merchandise now brought into the country was very different from that which had been imported in the time of Catherine. The French Revolution, the Napoleonic domination, the patriotic wars, the restoration of the Bourbons, and the other great events of that memorable epoch, had in the interval produced profound changes in the intellectual as well as the political condition of Western Europe. During the Napoleonic wars Russia had become closely associated with Germany; and now the peculiar intellectual fermentation which was going on among the German educated classes was reflected in the society of St. Petersburg. It did not appear, indeed, in the printed literature, for the Press censure had been recently organised on the principles laid down by Metternich, but it was none the less violent on that account. Whilst the periodicals were filled with commonplace meditations on youth, spring, the love of art, and similar innocent topics, the young generation was discussing in the salons all the burning questions which Metternich and his adherents were endeavouring to extinguish.

These discussions, if discussions they might be called, were not of a very serious kind. They were rather *causeries*, carried on by men of fashion, who spent a little of their leisure time in dipping into new books, and extracting therefrom enough to form the subject of a conversation. In true dilettante style these fashionable young philosophers culled from the newest books the newest thoughts and theories, and

retailed them in the salon or the ball-room. And they were always sure to find attentive listeners. The more astounding the idea or dogma, the more likely was it to be favourably received. No matter whether it came from the Rationalists, the Mystics, the Freemasons, or the Methodists, it was certain to find favour, provided it was novel and presented in an elegant form. The eclectic minds of that curious time could derive equal satisfaction from the brilliant discourses of the reactionary jesuitical De Maistre, the revolutionary odes of Púshkin, and the mystical ravings of Frau von Krüdener. For the majority the vague theosophic doctrines and the projects for a spiritual union of governments and peoples had perhaps the greatest charm, being specially commended by the fact that they enjoyed the protection and sympathy of the Emperor. Pious souls discovered in the mystical lucubrations of Jung-Stilling and Baader the final solution of all existing difficulties, political, social, and philosophical. Men of less dreamy temperament put their faith in political economy and constitutional theories, and sought a foundation for their favourite schemes in the past history of the country and in the supposed fundamental peculiarities of the national character. Like the young German democrats, who were then talking enthusiastically about Teutons, Cheruskers, Skalds, the shade of Arminius, and the heroes of the Niebelungen, these young Russian *savants* recognised in early Russian history — when reconstructed according to their own fancy — lofty political ideals,

and dreamed of resuscitating the ancient institutions in all their pristine imaginary splendour.

Each age has its peculiar social and political panaceas. One generation puts its trust in religion, another in philanthropy, a third in written constitutions, a fourth in universal suffrage, a fifth in popular education. In the Epoch of the Restoration, as it is called, the favourite panacea was secret political association. Very soon after the overthrow of Napoleon, the peoples who had risen in arms to obtain political independence discovered that they had merely changed masters. The Princes reconstructed Europe according to their own convenience, without paying much attention to patriotic aspirations, and forgot their promises of liberal institutions as soon as they were again firmly seated on their thrones. This was naturally for many a bitter deception. The young generation, excluded from all share in political life and gagged by the stringent police supervision, sought to realise its political aspirations by means of secret societies, resembling more or less the masonic brotherhoods. There were the Burschenschaften in Germany; the Union, and the "Aide toi et le ciel t'aidera," in France; the Order of the Hammer in Spain; the Carbonari in Italy; and the Hetairia in Greece. In Russia the young nobles followed the prevailing fashion. Secret societies were formed, and in December, 1825, an attempt was made to raise a military insurrection in St. Petersburg, for the purpose of deposing the Imperial family and proclaiming a republic; but the attempt

failed, and the vague Utopian dreams of the romantic would-be reformers were swept away by grapeshot.

This "December catastrophe," still vividly remembered, was for the society of St. Petersburg like the giving way of the floor in a crowded ball-room. But a moment before, all had been animated, careless, and happy; now consternation was depicted on every face. The salons that but yesterday had been ringing with lively discussions on morals, æsthetics, politics, and theology were now silent and deserted. Many of those who had been wont to lead the *causeries* had been removed to the cells of the fortress, and those who had not been arrested trembled for themselves or their friends; for nearly all had of late dabbled more or less in the theory and practice of revolution. The announcement that five of the conspirators had been condemned to the gallows and the others sentenced to transportation did not tend to calm the consternation. Society was like a discomfited child, who, amidst the delight and exultation of letting off fireworks, has had his fingers severely burnt.

The sentimental, wavering Alexander I. had been succeeded by his stern, energetic brother Nicholas, and the command went forth that there should be no more fireworks, no more dilettante philosophising or political aspirations. There was, however, little need for such an order. Society had been, for the moment at least, effectually cured of all tendencies to political dreaming. It had discovered, to its astonishment and dismay, that these new ideas,

which were to bring temporal salvation to humanity, and to make all men happy, virtuous, refined, and poetical, led in reality to exile and the scaffold! The pleasant dream was at an end, and the fashionable world, giving up its former habits, took to harmless occupations — card-playing, dissipation, and the reading of French light literature. "The French quadrille," as a writer of the time tersely expresses it, "has taken the place of Adam Smith."

When the storm had passed, the life of the salons began anew, but it was very different from what it had been. There was no longer any talk about political economy, theology, popular education, administrative abuses, social and political reforms. Everything that had any relation to politics in the wider sense of the term was by tacit consent avoided. Discussions there were as of old, but they were now confined to literary topics, theories of art, and similar innocent subjects.

This indifference or positive repugnance to philosophy and political science, strengthened and prolonged by the repressive system of administration adopted by Nicholas, was of course fatal to the many-sided intellectual activity which had flourished during the preceding reign, but it was by no means unfavourable to the cultivation of imaginative literature. On the contrary, by excluding those practical interests which tend to disturb artistic production and to engross the attention of the public, it fostered what was called in the phraseology of that time "the pure-hearted worship of the Muses." We

need not, therefore, be surprised to find that the reign of Nicholas, which is commonly and not altogether unjustly described as an epoch of social and intellectual stagnation, may be called in a certain sense the Golden Age of Russian literature.

Already in the preceding reign the struggle between the Classical and the Romantic school — between the adherents of traditional æsthetic principles and the partisans of untrammelled poetic inspiration — which was being carried on in Western Europe, was reflected in Russia. A group of young men belonging to the aristocratic society of St. Petersburg embraced with enthusiasm the new doctrines, and declared war against "classicism," under which term they understood all that was antiquated, dry, and pedantic. Discarding the stately, lumbering, unwieldy periods which had hitherto been in fashion, they wrote a light, elastic, vigorous style, and formed a literary society for the express purpose of ridiculing the most approved classical writers. The new principles found many adherents, and the new style many admirers, but this only intensified the hostility of the literary conservatives. The staid, respectable leaders of the old school, who had all their lives kept the fear of Boileau before their eyes and considered his precepts as the infallible utterances of æsthetic wisdom, thundered against the impious innovations as unmistakable symptoms of literary decline and moral degeneracy — representing the boisterous young iconoclasts as dissipated Don Juans and dangerous free-thinkers.

Thus for some time in Russia, as in Western Europe, "a terrible war raged on Parnassus." At first the Government frowned at the innovators, on account of certain revolutionary odes which one of their number had written; but when the Romantic Muse, having turned away from the present as essentially prosaic, went back into the distant past and soared into the region of sublime abstractions, the most keen-eyed Press censors found no reason to condemn her worship, and the authorities placed almost no restrictions on free poetic inspiration. Romantic poetry acquired the protection of the Government and the patronage of the Court, and the names of Zhukófski, Púshkin, and Lérmontof — the three chief representatives of the Russian Romantic school — became household words in all ranks of the educated classes.

These three great luminaries of the literary world were of course attended by a host of satellites of various magnitudes, who did all in their power to refute the Romantic principles by *reductiones ad absurdum*. Endowed for the most part with considerable facility of composition, the poetasters poured forth their feelings with torrential recklessness, demanding freedom for their inspiration, and cursing the age that fettered them with its prosaic cares, its cold reason, and its dry science. At the same time the dramatists and novelists created heroes of immaculate character and angelic purity, endowed with all the cardinal virtues in the superlative degree; and, as a contrast to these, terrible

Satanic personages with savage passions, gleaming daggers, deadly poisons, and all manner of aimless melodramatic villainy. These stilted productions, interspersed with light satirical essays, historical sketches, literary criticism, and amusing anecdotes, formed the contents of the periodical literature, and completely satisfied the wants of the reading public. Almost no one at that time took any interest in public affairs or foreign politics. The acts of the Government which were watched most attentively were the promotions in the service and the conferring of decorations. The publication of a new tale by Zagóskin or Marlínski — two writers now wellnigh forgotten — seemed of much greater importance than any amount of legislation, and such events as the French Revolution of 1830 paled before the publication of a new poem by Púshkin.

The Transcendental philosophy, which in Germany went hand in hand with the Romantic literature, found likewise a faint reflection in Russia. A number of young professors and students in Moscow, who had become ardent admirers of German literature, passed from the works of Schiller, Goethe, and Hoffmann to the writings of Schelling and Hegel. Trained in the Romantic school, these young philosophers found at first a special charm in Schelling's mystical system, teeming with hazy poetical metaphors, and presenting a misty grandiose picture of the universe; but gradually they felt the want of some logical basis for their speculations, and Hegel became their favourite. Gallantly they struggled

with the uncouth terminology and epigrammatic paradoxes of the great thinker, and strove to force their way through the intricate mazes of his logical formulæ. With all the ardour of neophytes they looked at every phenomenon — even the most trivial incident of common life — from the philosophical point of view, talked day and night about principles, ideas, subjectivity, *Weltauffassung*, and similar abstract entities, and habitually attacked the "hydra of unphilosophy" by analysing the phenomena presented and relegating the ingredient elements to the recognised categories. In ordinary life they were men of quiet, grave, contemplative demeanour, but their faces could flush and their blood boil when they discussed the all-important question, whether it is possible to pass logically from Pure Being through Nonentity to the conception of Development and Definite Existence!

We know how in Western Europe Romanticism and Transcendentalism, in their various forms, sunk into oblivion, and were replaced by a literature which had a closer connection with ordinary prosaic wants and plain everyday life. The educated public became weary of the Romantic writers, who were always "sighing like furnace," delighting in solitude, cold eternity, and moonshine, deluging the world with their heart-gushings, and calling on the heavens and the earth to stand aghast at their Promethean agonising or their Wertherean despair. Healthy human nature revolted against the poetical enthusiasts, who had lost the faculty of seeing things in

their natural light, and who constantly indulged in that morbid self-analysis which is fatal to genuine feeling and vigorous action. And in this healthy reaction the philosophers fared no better than the poets, with whom indeed they had much in common. Shutting their eyes to the visible world around them, they had busied themselves with burrowing in the mysterious depths of Absolute Being, grappling with the *ego* and the *non-ego*, constructing the great world, visible and invisible, out of their own puny internal self-consciousness, endeavouring to appropriate all departments of human thought, and imparting to every subject they touched the dryness and rigidity of an algebraical formula. Gradually men with real human sympathies began to perceive that from all this philosophical turmoil little real advantage was to be derived. It became only too evident that the philosophers were perfectly reconciled with all the evil in the world, provided it did not contradict their theories; that they were men of the same type as the physician in Molière's comedy, whose chief care was that his patients should die *selon les ordnances de la médecine.*

In Russia the reaction first appeared in the æsthetic literature. Its first influential representative was Gógol (b. 1808, d. 1852), who may be called, in a certain sense, the Russian Dickens. A minute comparison of those two great humourists would perhaps show as many points of contrast as of similarity, but there is a strong superficial resemblance between them. They both possessed an inexhaustible

supply of broad humour and an imagination of marvellous vividness. Both had the power of seeing the ridiculous side of common things, and the talent of producing caricatures that had a wonderful semblance of reality. A little calm reflection would suffice to show that the characters presented are for the most part psychological impossibilities — one-sided types rather than living human beings; but on first making their acquaintance we are so struck with one or two life-like characteristics and various little details dexterously introduced, and at the same time we are so carried away by the overflowing fun of the narrative, that we have neither time nor inclination to use our critical faculties. In a very short time Gógol's fame spread throughout the length and breadth of the Empire, and many of his characters became as familiar to his countrymen as Sam Weller and Mrs. Gamp are to us. His descriptions were so graphic — so like the world which everybody knew! The characters seemed to be old acquaintances hit off to the life; and readers revelled in that peculiar pleasure which most of us derive from seeing our friends successfully mimicked. Even the Iron Tsar could not resist the fun and humour of "The Inspector" (Revizór), and not only laughed heartily but also protected the author against the tyranny of the literary censors, who considered that the piece was not written in a sufficiently "well-intentioned" tone. In a word, the reading public laughed as it had never laughed before, and this wholesome genuine merriment did

much to destroy the morbid appetite for Byronic heroes and Romantic affectation.

The Romantic Muse did not at once abdicate, but with the spread of Gógol's popularity her reign was practically at an end. In vain some of the conservative critics decried the new favourite as talentless, prosaic, and vulgar. The public were not to be robbed of their amusement for the sake of any abstract æsthetic considerations; and young authors, taking Gógol for their model, chose their subjects from real life, and endeavoured to delineate with minute truthfulness.

This new intellectual movement was at first purely literary, and affected merely the manner of writing novels, tales, and poems. The critics who had previously demanded beauty of form and elegance of expression now demanded accuracy of description, condemned the aspirations towards so-called high art, and praised loudly those who produced the best literary photographs. But authors and critics did not long remain on this purely æsthetic standpoint. The authors, in describing reality, began to indicate moral approval and condemnation, and the critics began to pass from the criticism of the representations to the criticism of the realities represented. A poem or a tale was often used as a peg on which to hang a moral lecture, and the fictitious characters were soundly rated for their sins of omission and commission. Much was said about the defence of the oppressed, female emancipation, honour and humanitarianism; and ridicule was unsparingly

launched against all forms of ignorance, apathy, and the spirit of routine. The ordinary refrain was that the public ought now to discard what was formerly regarded as poetical and sublime, and to occupy itself with practical concerns — with the real wants of social life. The moral theory previously in fashion was a special object of attack. The moralists had been teaching that moral perfection was to be attained by the study of philosophy and the cultivation of the æsthetic faculties. The leaders of the new movement, on the contrary, adopted the theory that vice and crime do not proceed from any inherent defects in human nature, but from external circumstances — from unreasonable artificial obstacles which unnecessarily hinder the free and complete satisfaction of our instincts and natural desires. From these premises the readers could easily draw for themselves the inevitable conclusion that moral progress was to be made, not by modifying human nature, but by transforming the social organisation in such a way that the instincts and natural desires should find free scope and unrestricted satisfaction.

This change in the spirit of the literature was, like all the changes which I have already described, the result of foreign influence. There was at that time in France a wide-spread conviction, formed from the experience of half a century, that human felicity was not to be attained by political revolutions, and that true progress could be made only by undertaking radical reforms in the existing *social* organisation. This conviction found expression not only in the

writings of the regular philosophers, which were little read, but also in the popular literature, under the form of complaints against the injustice of existing social arrangements, and vague hopes of a social regeneration. Works of this kind had found their way to St. Petersburg and Moscow, and some of the leading literary men who read them — men who had experienced social injustice in their own persons — became converts to the doctrine.[1] The change above alluded to was, in fact, the reflection of the socialistic movement which was to culminate in the revolutionary agitation of 1848.

It may seem to some people strange that in Russia, under the severe rule of Nicholas, who habitually stamped out most rigorously all ideas and theories which could by any possibility be considered revolutionary, such principles as these should have been allowed to find expression in the periodical literature. It must, however, be remembered that down till 1848 the revolutionary power of these ideas was not generally recognised, and that some of them were quite in accordance with the policy of the Emperor himself. Nicholas always felt a profound antipathy to philosophy and abstract ideas of all kinds, and desired that his subjects should confine their attention to their personal concerns and their material welfare. He had an instinctive conviction that for ordinary mortals material welfare was of far more

[1] Of the two principal leaders of the movement, one (Belinski) was the son of a poor military surgeon, and the other (Herzen) was of illegitimate birth.

importance than those vague sublime blessings that dreamy philosophical minds were always longing to obtain; and this instinctive conviction of his seemed to find a clear, energetic expression in the writers of the new school, who made no allusions to ancient Romans, republican institutions, or constitutional monarchy, and who in general bore no resemblance to "the men of December," or to Polish conspirators — the only revolutionary types with which Nicholas was personally acquainted. If the writers themselves were aware of the revolutionary element which their ideas contained, they carefully concealed the fact. Indeed, we must do them the justice to say that they displayed an amount of literary tact and dexterity that might have blinded more sagacious men than the Press censors of that time. When they could not venture to express themselves plainly, they threw out intelligible hints, and the public very soon learned "to read between the lines."

This new intellectual movement was spreading rapidly when it was suddenly arrested by political events in the West. The February Revolution in Paris, and the political fermentation which appeared during 1848–1849 in almost every country in Europe, alarmed the Emperor Nicholas and his counsellors. A Russian army was sent into Austria to suppress the Hungarian insurrection and save the power of the Habsburg dynasty, and the most stringent measures were taken to prevent disorders at home. One of the first precautions for the preservation of domestic

tranquillity was to muzzle the Press more firmly than before, and to silence the aspirations towards social reform; thenceforth nothing could be printed which was not in strict accordance with the ultra-patriotic theory of Russian history, as expressed by Count Benkendorff: "The past has been admirable, the present is more than magnificent, and the future will surpass all that the human imagination can conceive!" The alarm caused by the revolutionary disorders spread to the non-official world, and gave rise to much patriotic self-congratulation. "The nations of the West," it was said, "envy us, and if they knew us better — if they could see how happy and prosperous we are — they would envy us still more. We ought not, however, to withdraw from Europe our solicitude; its hostility should not deprive us of our high mission of saving order and restoring rest to the nations; we ought to teach them to obey authority as we do. It is for us to introduce the saving principle of order into a world that has fallen a prey to anarchy. Russia ought not to abandon that mission which has been entrusted to her by the heavenly and by the earthly Tsar." [1]

Men who saw in the significant political eruption of 1848 nothing but an outburst of meaningless, aimless anarchy, and who believed that their country was destined to restore order throughout the civilised world, had of course little time or inclination to think

[1] These words were written by Tchaadáef, who, a few years before, had vigorously attacked the Slavophils for enouncing similar views.

of putting their own house in order. No one now spoke of the necessity of social reform; the recently-awakened aspirations and expectations seemed to be completely forgotten. The critics returned to their old theory that art and literature should be cultivated for their own sake and not used as a vehicle for the propagation of ideas foreign to their nature. It seemed, in short, as if all the prolific ideas which had for a time occupied the public attention had been merely "writ in water," and had now disappeared without leaving a trace behind them.

In reality, however, the movement had been by no means unproductive. The majority of those who had sympathised with it and been affected by it were merely silenced or momentarily frightened. Though no protest was allowed to appear in the literature, many people did not share the pseudo-patriotism which taught that all manner of oppression and abuses should be borne with silent resignation, provided that Russia was powerful in the military sense of the term and feared by her Western neighbours. In St. Petersburg began to be formed coteries of young men who followed attentively the political drama that was being played out in the West, and studied those social and economic questions which were the chief cause of the political agitation. Of their studies in political economy and social science I shall have occasion to speak hereafter. Even among those who did not take the trouble to study the matter there were many who instinctively rejected the interpretation adopted by the Govern-

ment and the official press, and who could not join in the anathemas against political liberty or in the praises of patriarchal autocracy. In short, the conservative reaction and the accompanying antipathy to all social and political questions were neither so strong nor so deep as they seemed. When the Crimean War broke out they acquired an additional momentary strength, but when the war proved disastrous, and the Emperor Nicholas, who was their living incarnation, died, they disappeared as if by enchantment, and were succeeded by a passionate enthusiasm for political and social reform such as Russia had never seen before. This strange intellectual and moral revival and its important practical results will be described in the sequel.

I trust I have said sufficient to show what a close intellectual connection has existed between Russia and Western Europe since the time of Peter the Great. Every intellectual movement which has appeared in Russia during the last century and a half has been the reflection of some movement in France or Germany. Thus the window which Peter opened in order to enable his subjects to look into Europe has well served its purpose.

CHAPTER X

THE SERFS

IN the earliest period of Russian history the rural population was composed of three distinct classes. At the bottom of the scale stood the slaves, who were very numerous. Their numbers were continually augmented by prisoners of war, by freemen who voluntarily sold themselves as slaves, by insolvent debtors, and by certain categories of criminals. Immediately above the slaves were the free agricultural labourers, who had no permanent domicile, but wandered about the country and settled temporarily where they happened to find work and satisfactory remuneration. In the third place, distinct from these two classes, and in some respects higher in the social scale, were the peasants properly so called.[1]

These peasants proper, who may be roughly described as small farmers or cottiers, were distinguished from the free agricultural labourers in two respects: they were possessors of land in property or usufruct, and they were members of a rural Com-

[1] My chief authority for the early history of the peasantry has been Bêláef, "Krestyáné na Rusí," Moscow, 1860; a most able and conscientious work. By the recent death of M. Bêláef, Russia has lost one of her most learned and laborious historical investigators.

mune. The Communes were free primitive corporations which elected their office-bearers from among the heads of families, and sent delegates to act as judges or assessors in the Prince's Court. Some of the Communes possessed land of their own, whilst others were settled on the estates of the landed proprietors or on the extensive domains of the monasteries. In the latter case the peasant paid a fixed yearly rent in money, in produce, or in labour, according to the terms of his contract with the proprietor or the monastery; but he did not thereby sacrifice in any way his personal liberty. As soon as he had fulfilled the engagements stipulated in the contract and settled accounts with the owner of the land, he was free to change his domicile as he pleased.

If we turn now from these early times to the eighteenth century, we find that the position of the rural population has entirely changed in the interval. The distinction between slaves, agricultural labourers, and peasants has completely disappeared. All three categories have melted together into a common class, called serfs, who are regarded as the property of the landed proprietors or of the State. "The proprietors sell their peasants and domestic servants not even in families, but one by one, like cattle, as is done nowhere else in the whole world, from which practice there is not a little wailing."[1] And yet the Government, whilst professing to re-

[1] These words are taken from an Imperial ukase of April 15th, 1721. Pólnoe Sobránie Zakónov, No. 3,770.

gret the existence of the practice, takes no energetic measures to prevent it. On the contrary, it deprives the serfs of all legal protection, and expressly commands that if any serf shall dare to present a petition against his master, he shall be punished with the knout and transported for life to the mines of Nertchinsk. (Ukase of August 22nd, 1767.)[1]

How did this important change take place, and how is it to be explained?

If we ask any educated Russian who has never specially occupied himself with historical investigations regarding the origin of serfage in Russia, he will probably reply somewhat in this fashion: "In Russia slavery has never existed (!), and even serfage in the West-European sense has never been recognised by law! In ancient times the rural population was completely free, and every peasant might change his domicile on St. George's Day — that is to say, at the end of the agricultural year. This right of migration was abolished by Tsar Boris Godunóf — who, by the way, was half a Tartar and more than half a usurper — and herein lies the essence of serfage in the Russian sense. The peasants have never been the property of the landed proprietors, but have always been personally free; and the only legal restriction on their liberty was that they were not allowed to change their domicile

[1] This is an ukase of the liberal and humane Catherine! How she reconciled it with her respect and admiration for Beccaria's humane views on criminal law she does not explain, and in her eloquent descriptions of the amazing progress of civilisation in her Empire she forgets to mention it.

without the permission of the proprietor. If so-called serfs were sometimes sold, the practice was simply an abuse not justified by legislation."

This simple explanation, in which may be detected a note of patriotic pride, is almost universally accepted in Russia; but it contains, like most popular conceptions of the distant past, a curious mixture of fact and fiction. Recent serious investigations tend to show that the power of the proprietors over the peasants came into existence, not suddenly, as the result of an ukase, but gradually, as a consequence of permanent economic and political causes, and that Boris Godunóf was not more to blame than many of his predecessors and successors.[1]

Although the peasants in ancient Russia were free to wander about as they chose, there appeared at a very early period — long before the reign of Boris Godunóf — a decided tendency in the Princes, in the proprietors, and in the Communes to prevent migration. This tendency will be easily understood if we remember that land without labourers is useless, and that in Russia at that time the population was small in comparison with the amount of reclaimed and easily reclaimable land. The Prince desired to have as many inhabitants as possible in his principality, because the amount of his regular revenues depended on the number of the population. The landed proprietor desired to have as many

[1] See especially Pobêdonóstsef, in the *Rússki Vêstnik*, 1858, No. 11, and "Istorítcheskiya izslêdovaniya i statyí" (St. Petersburg, 1876), by the same author; also Pogódin, in the *Rússkaya Besêda*, 1858, No. 4.

peasants as possible on his estate, to till for him the land which he reserved for his own use, and to pay him for the remainder a yearly rent in money, produce, or labour. The free Communes desired to have a number of members sufficient to keep the whole of the Communal land under cultivation, because each Commune had to pay yearly to the Prince a fixed sum in money or agricultural produce, and the greater the number of able-bodied members the less each individual had to pay. To use the language of political economy, the Princes, the landed proprietors, and the free Communes all appeared as buyers in the labour market; and as the demand was far in excess of the supply, there was naturally a brisk competition. Nowadays when young colonies or landed proprietors in an outlying corner of the world are similarly in need of labour, they seek to supply the want by organising a regular system of emigration — using illegal violent means, such as kidnapping expeditions, merely as an exceptional expedient. In old Russia regularly organised emigration was of course impossible, and consequently illegal or violent measures were not the exception but the rule. The chief practical advantage of the frequent military expeditions for those who took part in them was the acquisition of prisoners of war, who were commonly transformed into slaves by their captors. If it be true, as some assert, that only unbaptised prisoners were legally considered lawful booty, it is certain that in practice before the unification of the principalities under the

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Tsars of Moscow little distinction was made in this respect between unbaptised foreigners and Orthodox Russians.[1] A similar method was sometimes employed for the acquisition of free peasants: the more powerful proprietors organised kidnapping expeditions, and carried off by force the peasants settled on the land of their weaker neighbours.

Under these circumstances it was only natural that those who possessed this valuable commodity should do all in their power to keep it. Many, if not all, of the free Communes adopted the simple measure of refusing to allow a member to depart until he had found some one to take his place. The proprietors never, so far as we know, laid down formally such a principle, but in practice they did all in their power to retain the peasants actually settled on their estates. For this purpose some simply employed force, whilst others acted under cover of legal formalities. The peasant who accepted land from a proprietor rarely brought with him the necessary implements, cattle, and capital to begin at once his occupations and to feed himself and his family till the ensuing harvest. He was obliged, therefore, to borrow from his landlord, and the debt thus contracted was easily converted into a means of preventing his departure if he wished to change his domicile. We need not enter into further details. The proprietors were the capitalists of the time.

[1] On this subject see Tchitchérin, "Ópyty po istórii Rússkago práva," Moscow, 1858, p. 162 *et seq.*; and Lokhvitski, "O plênnykh po drévnemu Rússkomu právu," Moscow, 1855.

Frequent bad harvests, plagues, fires, military raids, and similar misfortunes often reduced even prosperous peasants to beggary. The *muzhík* was probably then, as now, only too ready to accept a loan without taking the necessary precautions for repaying it. The laws relating to debt were terribly severe, and there was no powerful judicial organisation to protect the weak. If we remember all this we shall not be surprised to learn that a considerable part of the peasantry were practically serfs before serfage was recognised by law.

So long as the country was broken up into independent principalities, separated from each other by imaginary boundaries, and each landowner was almost an independent prince in his estate, the peasants easily found a remedy for these abuses in flight. They fled to a neighbouring proprietor who could protect them from their former landlord and his claims, or they took refuge in a neighbouring principality, where they were, of course, still safer. All this was changed when the independent principalities were transformed into the Tsardom of Muscovy. The Tsars had new reasons for opposing the migration of the peasants and new means for preventing it. The old Princes had simply given grants of land to those who served them, and left the grantee to do with his land what seemed good to him; the Tsars, on the contrary, gave to those who served them merely the usufruct of a certain quantity of land, and carefully proportioned the quantity to the rank and the obligations of the

receiver. In this change there was plainly a new reason for fixing the peasants to the soil. The real value of a grant depended not so much on the amount of land as on the number of peasants settled on it, and hence any migration of the population was tantamount to a removal of the ancient landmarks — that is to say, to a disturbance of the arrangements made by the Tsar. Suppose, for instance, that the Tsar granted to a Boyar or some lesser dignitary an estate on which were settled ten peasant families, and that afterwards five of these emigrated to neighbouring proprietors. In this case the recipient might justly complain that he lost half of his estate — though the amount of land was in no way diminished — and that he was consequently unable to fulfil his obligations. Such complaints would be rarely, if ever, made by the great dignitaries, for they had the means of attracting peasants to their estates;[1] but the small proprietors had good reason to complain, and the Tsar was bound to remove their grievances. The attaching of the peasants to the soil was in fact the natural consequence of feudal tenures — an integral part of the Muscovite political system. The Tsar compelled the nobles to serve him, and was unable to pay

[1] In confirmation of this statement we have plain indications in the documents of the time that the great dignitaries were at first hostile to the *adscriptio glebæ*. We find a similar phenomenon at a much more recent date in Little-Russia. Long after serfage had been legalised in that region by Catherine II., the great proprietors, such as Rumyantsef, Razumofski, Bezborodko, continued to attract to their estates the peasants of the smaller proprietors. See the article of Pogódin, in the *Rússkaya Besêda*, 1858, No. 4, p. 154.

them in money. He was obliged, therefore, to procure for them some other means of livelihood. Evidently the simplest method of solving the difficulty was to give them land, with a certain number of labourers — in other words, to introduce serfage.

Towards the free Communes the Tsars had to act in the same way for similar reasons. The Communes, like the nobles, had obligations to the Sovereign, and could not fulfil them if the peasants were allowed to migrate from one locality to another. They were, in a certain sense, the property of the Tsar, and it was only natural that the Tsar should do for himself what he had done for his nobles.

With these new reasons for fixing the peasants to the soil came, as has been said, new means of preventing migration. Formerly it was an easy matter to flee to a neighbouring principality, but now all the principalities were combined under one ruler, and the foundations of a centralised administration were laid. Severe fugitive laws were issued against those who attempted to change their domicile and against the proprietors who should harbour the runaways. Unless the peasant chose to face the difficulties of "squatting" in the inhospitable northern forests, or resolved to brave the dangers of the steppe, he could nowhere escape the heavy hand of Moscow.[1]

[1] The above account of the origin of serfage in Russia is founded on a careful examination of the evidence which we possess on the subject, but I must not conceal the fact that some of the statements are founded on inference rather than on direct, unequivocal documentary evidence. The whole question is one of great difficulty, and will in all probability not be satisfactorily solved until

The indirect consequences of thus attaching the peasants to the soil did not at once become apparent. The serf retained all the civil rights he had hitherto enjoyed, except that of changing his domicile. He could still appear before the courts of law as a freeman, freely engage in trade or industry, enter into all manner of contracts, and rent land for cultivation.[1] Even the restriction on the liberty of his movements was not so burdensome as it may at first sight appear, for change of domicile had never been very frequent among the peasantry, and the force of custom prevented the proprietors for a time from making any important alterations in the existing contracts.

As time wore on, however, the change in the legal relation between the two classes became apparent in real life. In attaching the peasantry to the soil, the Government had been so thoroughly engrossed with the direct financial aim that it entirely overlooked, or wilfully shut its eyes to, the ulterior consequences which must necessarily flow from the policy it adopted. It was evident that as soon as the relation between proprietor and peasant was removed from the region of voluntary contract by being rendered indissoluble, the weaker of the two parties legally tied together must fall completely under the power of the stronger unless energetically protected by the

a large number of the old local Land-Registers (*Pistsóviya Knigi*) have been published. Surely these registers are of more importance than many of the works published by the Imperial Archæographical Commission.

[1] Bêláef, p. 250.

law and the Administration. And yet the Government paid no attention to this inevitable consequence. So far from endeavouring to protect the peasantry from the oppression of the proprietors, it did not even determine by law the mutual obligations which ought to exist between the two classes. Taking advantage of this omission, the proprietors soon began to impose whatever obligations they thought fit; and as they had no legal means of enforcing fulfilment, they gradually introduced a patriarchal jurisdiction similar to that which they exercised over their slaves, with fines and corporal punishment as means of coercion. From this they ere long proceeded a step further, and began to sell their peasants without the land on which they were settled. At first this was merely a flagrant abuse unsanctioned by law, for the peasant had never been declared the private property of the landed proprietor; but the Government tacitly sanctioned the practice, and even exacted dues on such sales, as on the sale of slaves. Finally the right to sell peasants without land was formally recognised by various Imperial ukases.[1]

The old Communal organisation still existed, and had never been legally deprived of its authority, but it was now powerless to protect the members. The proprietor could easily overcome any active resistance by selling or converting into domestic servants the peasants who dared to oppose his will.

[1] For instance, the ukases of October 13th, 1675, and June 25th, 1682. See Bêlâef, pp. 203–209.

The peasantry had thus sunk to the condition of serfs, practically deprived of legal protection and subject to the arbitrary will of the proprietors; but they were still in some respects legally and actually distinguished from the slaves on the one hand and the "free wandering people" on the other. These distinctions were obliterated by Peter the Great and his immediate successors.

To effect his great civil and military reforms, Peter required an annual revenue such as his predecessors had never dreamed of, and he was consequently always on the lookout for some new object of taxation. When looking about for this purpose, his eye naturally fell on the slaves, the domestic servants, and the free agricultural labourers. None of these classes paid taxes — a fact which stood in flagrant contradiction with his fundamental principle of polity, that every subject should in some way serve the State. He caused, therefore, a national census to be taken, in which all the various classes of the rural population — slaves, domestic servants, agricultural labourers, peasants — should be inscribed in one category; and he imposed equally on all the members of this category a poll-tax, in lieu of the former land-tax, which had lain exclusively on the peasants. To facilitate the collection of this tax the proprietors were made responsible for their serfs; and the "free wandering people" who did not wish to enter the army were ordered, under pain of being sent to the galleys, to inscribe themselves as members of a Commune or as serfs to some proprietor.

These measures had a considerable influence, if not on the actual position of the peasantry, at least on the legal conceptions regarding them. By making the proprietor pay the poll-tax for his serfs, as if they were slaves or cattle, the law seemed to sanction the idea that they were part of his goods and chattels. Besides this, it introduced the entirely new principle that any member of the rural population not legally attached to the land or to a proprietor should be regarded as a vagrant, and treated accordingly. Thus the principle that every subject should in some way serve the State had found its complete realisation. There was no longer any room in Russia for free men.

This change in the position of the peasantry, together with the hardships and oppression by which it was accompanied, naturally increased fugitivism and vagrancy. Thousands of serfs ran away from their masters, and fled to the steppe or sought enrolment in the army. To prevent this the Government considered it necessary to take severe and energetic measures. The serfs were forbidden to enlist without the permission of their masters, and those who persisted in presenting themselves for enrolment were to be beaten "cruelly" (*zhestóko*) with the knout, and sent to the mines.[1] The proprietors, on the other hand, received the right to transport without trial their unruly serfs to Siberia, and even to send them to the mines for life.[2]

[1] Ukase of June 2nd, 1742.

[2] See ukase of January 17th, 1765, and of January 28th, 1766.

If these stringent measures had any effect it was not of long duration, for there soon appeared among the serfs a still stronger spirit of discontent and insubordination, which threatened to produce a general agrarian rising, and actually did create a movement resembling in many respects the Jacquerie in France and the Peasant War in Germany. A glance at the causes of this movement will help us to understand the real nature of serfage in Russia.

Up to this point serfage had, in spite of its flagrant abuses, a certain theoretical justification. It was, as we have seen, merely a part of a general political system in which obligatory service was imposed on all classes of the population. The serfs served the nobles in order that the nobles might serve the Tsar. In 1762 this theory was entirely overturned by a manifesto of Peter III. abolishing the obligatory service of the noblesse. According to strict justice this act ought to have been followed by the liberation of the serfs, for if the nobles were no longer obliged to serve the State they had no just claim to the service of the peasants. The Government had so completely forgotten the original meaning of serfage that it never thought of carrying out the measure to its logical consequences, but the peasantry held tenaciously to the ancient conceptions, and looked impatiently for a second manifesto liberating them from the power of the proprietors. Reports were spread that such a manifesto really existed, and was being concealed by the nobles. A spirit of insubordination accordingly appeared among the rural population, and local

insurrections broke out in several parts of the Empire.

At this critical moment Peter III. was dethroned and assassinated by a Court conspiracy. The peasants, who of course knew nothing of the real motives of the conspirators, supposed that the Tsar had been assassinated by those who wished to preserve serfage, and believed him to be a martyr in the cause of Emancipation. At the news of the catastrophe their hopes of Emancipation fell, but soon they were revived by new rumours. The Tsar, it was said, had escaped from the conspirators and was in hiding. Soon he would appear among his faithful peasants, and with their aid would regain his throne and punish the wicked oppressors. Anxiously he was awaited, and at last the glad tidings came that he had appeared in the Don country, that thousands of Cossacks had joined his standard, that he was everywhere putting the proprietors to death without mercy, and that he would soon arrive in the ancient capital!

Peter III. was in reality in his grave, but there was a terrible element of truth in these reports. A pretender, a Cossack called Pugatchéf, had really appeared on the Don, and had assumed the rôle which the peasants expected the late Tsar to play. Advancing through the country of the Lower Volga, he took several places of importance, put to death all the proprietors he could find, defeated on more than one occasion the troops sent against him, and threatened to advance into the heart of the Empire. It seemed as if the old troublous times were about to

be renewed — as if the country was once more to be pillaged by those wild Cossacks of the southern steppe. But the pretender showed himself incapable of playing the part he had assumed. His inhuman cruelty estranged many who would have otherwise followed him, and he was too deficient in decision and energy to take advantage of favourable circumstances. If it be true that he conceived the idea of creating a peasant empire (*muzhítskoe tsársto*), he was not the man to realise such a scheme. After a series of mistakes and defeats he was taken prisoner, and the insurrection was quelled.[1]

Meanwhile Peter III. had been succeeded by his consort, Catherine II. As she had no legal right to the throne, and was by birth a foreigner, she could not gain the affections of the people, and was obliged to court the favour of the noblesse. In such a difficult position she could not venture to apply her humane principles to the question of serfage. Even during the first years of her reign, when she had no reason to fear agrarian disturbances, she increased rather than diminished the power of the proprietors over their serfs, and the Pugatchéf affair confirmed her in this line of policy. During her reign serfage may be said to have reached its climax. The serfs

[1] Whilst living among the Bashkirs of the province of Samara in 1872, I found some interesting traditions regarding this pretender. Though nearly a century had elapsed since his death (1775), his name, his personal appearance, and his exploits were well known even to the younger generation. My informants firmly believed that he was not an impostor, but the genuine Tsar, dethroned by his ambitious consort, and that he never was taken prisoner, but "went away into foreign lands." When I asked whether he was still alive, and whether he might not one day return, they replied that they did not know.

were regarded by the law as part of the master's immovable property [1] — as part of the working capital of the estate — and as such they were bought, sold, and given as presents [2] in hundreds and thousands, sometimes with the land, and sometimes without it, sometimes in families, and sometimes individually. The only legal restriction was that they should not be offered for sale at the time of the conscription, and that they should at no time be sold publicly by auction, because such a custom was considered as "unbecoming in a European State." In all other respects the serfs might be treated as private property; and this view is to be found not only in the legislation, but also in the popular conceptions. It became customary — a custom that continued down to the year 1861 — to compute a noble's fortune, not by his yearly revenue or the extent of his estate, but by the number of his serfs. Instead of saying that a man had so many hundreds or thousands a year, or so many acres, it was commonly said that he had so many hundreds or thousands of "souls." And over these "souls" he exercised the most unlimited authority. The serfs had no legal means of self-defence. The Government feared that the granting to them of judicial or administrative protection would inevitably awaken in them a spirit of insubordination, and

[1] See ukase of October 7th, 1792.

[2] As an example of making presents of serfs, the following may be cited. Count Panin presented some of his subordinates for an Imperial recompense, and on receiving a refusal, made them a present of 4,000 serfs from his own estates. — Bêláef, p. 320.

hence it was ordered that those who presented complaints should be punished with the knout and sent to the mines.[1] It was only in extreme cases, when some instance of atrocious cruelty happened to reach the ears of the Sovereign, that the authorities interfered in the proprietor's jurisdiction, and these cases had not the slightest influence on the proprietors in general.[2]

The last years of the eighteenth century may be regarded as the turning-point in the history of serfage. Up till that time the power of the proprietors had steadily increased, and the area of serfage had rapidly expanded. Under the Emperor Paul we find the first decided symptoms of a reaction. He regarded the proprietors as his most efficient officers of police, but he desired to limit their authority, and for this purpose issued an ukase to the effect that the serfs should not be forced to work for their masters more than three days in the week. With the accession of Alexander I., in 1801, commenced a long series of abortive projects of a general emancipation, and endless attempts to correct the more glaring abuses; and during the reign of Nicholas no

[1] See the ukases of August 22nd, 1767, and March 30th, 1781.

[2] Perhaps the most horrible case on record is that of a certain lady called Saltykóf, who was brought to justice in 1768. According to the ukase regarding her crimes, she had killed by inhuman tortures in the course of ten or eleven years about a hundred of her serfs, chiefly of the female sex, and among them several young girls of eleven and twelve years of age. According to popular belief her cruelty proceeded from cannibal propensities, but this was not confirmed by the judicial investigation. Details in the "Russki Arkhiv," 1865, pp. 644–652. The atrocities practised on the estate of Count Araktchéyef, the favourite of Alexander I., at the commencement of the present century, have been frequently described, and are scarcely less revolting.

less than six committees were formed at different times to consider the question. But the practical result of all these efforts was extremely small. The custom of giving grants of land with peasants was abolished; certain slight restrictions were placed on the authority of the proprietors; a number of the worst specimens of the class were removed from the administration of their estates; a few who were convicted of atrocious cruelty were exiled to Siberia;[1] and some thousands of serfs were actually emancipated; but until the present reign no decisive radical measures were attempted, and the serfs did not receive even the right of making formal complaints. Serfage had in fact come to be regarded as a vital part of the State organism, and the only sure basis for autocracy. It was therefore treated tenderly, and the rights and protection accorded by various ukases were almost entirely illusory.

If we compare the development of serfage in Russia and in Western Europe, we find very many points in common, but in Russia the movement had certain peculiarities. One of the most important of these was caused by the rapid development of the autocratic power. In feudal Europe, where there was no strong central authority to control the noblesse, the free Communes entirely, or almost entirely, disappeared. They were either appropriated by the

[1] Speranski, for instance, when Governor of the province of Penza, brought to justice, amongst others, a proprietor who had caused one of his serfs to be flogged to death, and a lady who had murdered a serf boy by pricking him with a pen-knife because he had neglected to take proper care of a tame rabbit committed to his charge! — Korff, "Zhizn Speránskago," II., p. 127, note.

nobles or voluntarily submitted to powerful landed proprietors or to monasteries, and in this way the whole of the reclaimed land, with a few rare exceptions, became the property of the nobles or of the church. In Russia we find the same movement, but it was arrested by the Imperial power before all the land had been appropriated. The nobles could reduce to serfage the peasants settled on their estates, but they could not take possession of the free Communes, because such an appropriation would have infringed the rights and diminished the revenues of the Tsar. Down to the commencement of the present century, it is true, large grants of land with serfs were made to favoured individuals among the noblesse, and in the reign of Paul (1796–1801) a considerable number of estates were affected to the use of the Imperial family under the name of appanages (*Udyélniya iméniya*); but, on the other hand, the extensive church-lands, when secularised by Catherine II., were not distributed among the nobles, as in many other countries, but were transformed into State Demesnes. Thus, at the date of the Emancipation (1861), by far the greater part of the territory belonged to the State, and one-half of the rural population were so-called State Peasants (*Gosudárstvennie krestyané*).

Regarding the condition of these State Peasants, or Peasants of the Demesnes, as they are sometimes called, I may say briefly that they were, in a certain sense, serfs, being attached to the soil like the others; but their condition was, as a rule, somewhat better

than the serfs in the narrower acceptation of the term. They had to suffer much from the tyranny and extortion of the special administration under which they lived, but they had more land and more liberty than was commonly enjoyed on the estates of resident proprietors, and their position was much less precarious. It is often asserted that the officials of the Demesnes were worse than the serf-owners, because they had not the same interest in the prosperity of the peasantry; but this *à priori* reasoning does not stand the test of experience.

It is not a little interesting to observe the numerical proportion and geographical distribution of these two rural classes. In European Russia, as a whole, about three-eighths of the population were composed of serfs belonging to the nobles; but if we take the provinces separately we find great variations from this average. In five provinces the serfs were less than three per cent., whilst in others they formed more than seventy per cent. of the population! This is not an accidental phenomenon. In the geographical distribution of serfage we can see reflected the origin and history of the institution.

If we were to construct a map showing the geographical distribution of the serf population, we should at once perceive that serfage radiated from Moscow. Starting from that city as a centre and travelling in any direction towards the confines of the Empire, we find that, after making allowance for a few disturbing local influences, the proportion of serfs regularly declines in the successive provinces

traversed. In the region representing the old Muscovite Tsardom they form considerably more than a half of the peasantry. Immediately to the south and east of this, in the territory that was gradually annexed during the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century, the proportion varies from twenty-five to fifty per cent., and in the more recently annexed provinces it steadily decreases till it almost reaches zero.

We may perceive, too, that the percentage of serfs decreases towards the north much more rapidly than towards the east and south. This points to the essentially agricultural nature of serfage in its infancy. In the south and east there was abundance of rich "black earth" celebrated for its fertility, and the nobles in quest of estates naturally preferred this region to the inhospitable north, with its poor soil and severe climate.

A more careful examination of the supposed map[1] would bring out other interesting facts. Let me notice one by way of illustration. Had serfage been the result of conquest we should have found the Slavonic race settled on the State Demesnes, and the Finnish and Tartar tribes supplying the serfs of the nobles. In reality we find quite the reverse; the Finns and Tartars were nearly all State Peasants, and the serfs of the proprietors were nearly all of Slavonic race. This is to be accounted for by the

[1] Such a map was actually constructed by Troinitski ("Krêpostnóe Naselénié v Rossíi," St. Petersburg, 1861), but it is not nearly so graphic as it might be.

fact that the Finnish and Tartar tribes inhabit chiefly the outlying regions, in which serfage never attained such dimensions as in the centre of the Empire.

The dues paid by the serfs were of three kinds: labour, money, and farm produce. The last-named is so unimportant that it may be dismissed in a few words. It consisted chiefly of eggs, chickens, lambs, mushrooms, wild berries, and linen cloth. The amount of these various products depended entirely on the will of the master. The other two kinds of dues, as more important, we must examine more closely.

When a proprietor had abundance of fertile land and wished to farm on his own account, he commonly demanded from his serfs as much labour as possible. Under such a master the serfs were probably entirely free from money dues, and fulfilled their obligations to him by labouring in his fields in summer and transporting his grain to market in winter. When, on the contrary, a landowner had more serf labour at his disposal than he required for the cultivation of his fields, he put the superfluous serfs "on *obrók*" — that is to say, he allowed them to go and work where they pleased on condition of paying him a fixed yearly sum. Sometimes the proprietor did not farm at all on his own account, in which case he put all the serfs "on *obrók*," and generally gave to the Commune in usufruct the whole of the arable land and pasturage. In this way the *Mir* played the part of a tenant.

We have here the basis for a simple and important classification of estates in the time of serfage:

(1) Estates on which the dues were exclusively in labour; (2) Estates on which the dues were partly in labour and partly in money; and (3) Estates on which the dues were exclusively in money.

In the manner of exacting the labour dues there was considerable variety. According to the famous manifesto of Paul I., the peasant could not be compelled to work more than three days in the week; but this law was by no means universally observed, and those who did observe it had various methods of applying it. A few took it literally, and laid down a rule that the serfs should work for them three definite days in the week — for example, every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday — but this was an extremely inconvenient method, for it prevented the field labour from being carried on regularly. A much more rational system was that according to which one-half of the serfs worked the first three days of the week, and the other half the remaining three. In this way there was, without any contravention of the law, a regular and constant supply of labour. It seems, however, that the great majority of the proprietors followed no strict method, and paid no attention whatever to Paul's manifesto, which gave to the peasant no legal means of making formal complaints. They simply summoned daily as many labourers as they required. The evil consequences of this for the peasants' crops were in part counteracted by making the peasants sow their own grain a little later than that of the proprietor, so that the master's harvest-work was finished, or

nearly finished, before their grain was ripe. This combination did not, however, always succeed, and in cases where there was a conflict of interests, the serf was, of course, the losing party. All that remained for him to do in such cases was to work a little in his own fields before six o'clock in the morning and after nine o'clock at night, and in order to render this possible, he economised his strength, and worked as little as possible in his master's fields during the day.

It has frequently been remarked, and with much truth — though the indiscriminate application of the principle has often led to unjustifiable legislative inactivity — that the practical result of institutions depends less on the intrinsic abstract nature of the institutions themselves than on the character of those who work them. So it was with serfage. When a proprietor habitually acted towards his serfs in an enlightened, rational, humane way, they had little reason to complain of their position, and their life was much easier than that of many men who live in a state of complete individual freedom and unlimited, unrestricted competition. When I say that the condition of many free men is worse than was the condition of many Russian serfs, the reader must not imagine that I am thinking of some barbarous tribe among whom freedom means an utter absence of law and an unrestricted right of pillage. On the contrary, I am thinking of a class of men who have the good fortune to live under the beneficent protection of British law, not in some dis-

tant, inhospitable colony, but between St. George's Channel and the North Sea. However paradoxical the statement may seem to those who are in the habit of regarding all forms of slavery from the sentimental point of view, it is unquestionable that the condition of serfs under such a proprietor as I have supposed was much more enviable than that of the majority of English agricultural labourers. Each family had a house of its own, with a cabbage-garden, one or more horses, one or two cows, several sheep, poultry, agricultural implements, a share of the Communal land, and everything else necessary for carrying on its small farming operations; and in return for this it had to supply the proprietor with an amount of labour which was by no means oppressive. If, for instance, a serf had three adult sons — and the households, as I have said, were at that time generally numerous — two of them might work for the proprietor, whilst he himself and the remaining son could attend exclusively to the family affairs. From those events which used to be called "the visitations of God" he had no fear of being permanently ruined. If his house was burnt, or his cattle died from the plague, or a series of "bad years" left him without seed for his fields, he could always count upon temporary assistance from his master. He was protected, too, against all oppression and exactions on the part of the officials; for the police, when there was any cause for its interference, applied to the proprietor, who was to a certain extent responsible for his serfs. Thus the serf

might live a tranquil, contented life, and die at a ripe old age, without ever having been conscious that serfage was a burden.

If all the serfs had lived in this way we might, perhaps, regret that the Emancipation was ever undertaken. In reality there was, as the French say, *le revers de la médaille*, and serfage generally appeared under a form very different from that which I have just depicted. The proprietors were, unfortunately, not all of the enlightened, humane type. Amongst them were many who demanded from their serfs a most inordinate amount of labour, and treated them in a most inhumane fashion.

These oppressors of their serfs may be divided into four categories. First, there were the proprietors who managed their own estates, and oppressed simply for the purpose of increasing their revenues. Secondly, there were a number of retired officers, who wished to establish a certain order and discipline on their estates, and who employed for this purpose the barbarous measures which were until lately used in the army, believing that merciless corporal punishment was the only means of curing laziness, disorderliness, and other vices. Thirdly, there were the absentees who lived beyond their means, and demanded from their steward, under pain of giving him or his son as a recruit, a much greater yearly sum than the estate could be reasonably expected to yield. Lastly, in the latter years of serfage, there were a number of men who bought estates as a mercantile speculation, and endeavoured to make as

much money out of them as possible in the shortest possible space of time.

Of all hard masters, the last-named were the most terrible. Utterly indifferent to the welfare of the serfs and the ultimate fate of the property, they cut down the timber, sold the cattle, exacted heavy money dues under threats of giving the serfs or their children as recruits, presented to the military authorities a number of conscripts greater than was required by law — selling the conscription receipts (*zatchétniya kvitántsii*) to the merchants and burghers who were liable to the conscription but did not wish to serve — compelled some of the richer serfs to buy their liberty at an enormous price, and, in a word, used every means, legal and illegal, for extracting money. By this system of management they ruined the estate completely in the course of a few years; but by that time they had realised probably the whole sum paid, with a very fair profit from the operation; and this profit could be considerably augmented by selling a number of the peasant families for transportation to another estate (*na svoz*), or by mortgaging the property in the Opekúnski Sovêt — a Government institution which lent money on landed property without examining carefully the nature of the security.

As to the means which the proprietors possessed of oppressing their peasants, we must distinguish between the legal and the actual. The legal were almost as complete as any one could desire. "The proprietor," it is said in the Laws (Vol. IX., § 1045,

ed. an. 1857), "may impose on his serfs every kind of labour, may take from them money dues (*obrók*) and demand from them personal service, with this one restriction, that they should not be thereby ruined, and that the number of days fixed by law should be left to them for their own work."[1] Besides this, he had the right to transform peasants into domestic servants, and might, instead of employing them in his own service, hire them out to others who had the rights and privileges of noblesse (§§ 1047–48). For all offences committed against himself or against any one under his jurisdiction he could subject the guilty ones to corporal punishment not exceeding forty lashes with the birch or fifteen blows with the stick (§ 1052); and if he considered any of his serfs as incorrigible he could present them to the authorities to be drafted into the army or transported to Siberia as he might desire (§§ 1053–55). In cases of insubordination, where the ordinary domestic means of discipline did not suffice, he could call in the police and the military to support his authority.

Such were the legal means by which the proprietor might oppress his peasants, and it will be readily understood that they were very considerable and very elastic. By law he had the power to impose any dues in labour or money which he might think fit, and in all cases the serfs were ordered to be docile and obedient (§ 1027). Corporal punishment, though

[1] I give here the references to the Code, because Russians commonly believe and assert that the hiring out of serfs, the infliction of corporal punishment, and similar practices were merely abuses unauthorised by law.

restricted by law, he could in reality apply to any extent. Certainly none of the serfs, and very few of the proprietors, were aware that the law placed any restriction on this right. All the proprietors were in the habit of using corporal punishment as they thought proper, and unless a proprietor became notorious for inhuman cruelty, the authorities never thought of interfering. But in the eyes of the peasants, corporal punishment was not the worst. What they feared infinitely more than the birch or the stick was the proprietor's power of giving them or their sons as recruits. The law assumed that this extreme means would be employed only against those serfs who showed themselves incorrigibly vicious or insubordinate; but the authorities accepted those presented without making any investigations, and consequently the proprietor might use this power as an effective means of extortion.

Against these means of extortion and oppression the serfs had no legal protection. The law provided them with no means of resisting any injustice to which they might be subjected, or of bringing to punishment the master who oppressed and ruined them. The Government, notwithstanding its sincere desire to protect them from inordinate burdens and cruel treatment, rarely interfered between the master and his serfs, being afraid of thereby undermining the authority of the proprietors, and awakening among the peasantry a spirit of insubordination. The serfs were left, therefore, to their own resources, and had to defend themselves as they best could.

The simplest way was open mutiny; but this was rarely employed, for they knew by experience that any attempt of the kind would be at once put down by the military and mercilessly punished. Much more favourite and efficient methods were passive resistance, flight, and fire-raising or murder.

We might naturally suppose that an unscrupulous proprietor, armed with the enormous legal and actual power which I have just described, could very easily extort from his peasants anything he desired. In reality, however, the process of extortion, when it exceeded a certain measure, was a very difficult operation. The Russian peasant has a capacity of patient endurance that would do honour to a martyr, and a power of continued, dogged, passive resistance such as is possessed, I believe, by no other class of men in Europe; and these qualities formed a very powerful barrier against the rapacity of unconscientious proprietors. As soon as the serfs remarked in their master a tendency to rapacity and extortion, they at once took measures to defend themselves. Their first step was to sell secretly all the cattle which they did not actually require, and all the movable property which they possessed, except the few articles necessary for everyday use; and the little capital that they thus realised was carefully hidden somewhere in or near the house. When this had been effected, the proprietor might threaten and punish as he liked, but he rarely succeeded in unearthing the hidden treasure. Many a peasant, under such circumstances, bore patiently the most cruel punishment, and saw his

sons taken away as recruits, and yet he persisted in declaring that he had no money to ransom himself and his children. A spectator in such a case would probably have advised him to give up his little store of money, and thereby liberate himself from persecution; but the peasants reasoned otherwise. They were convinced, and not without reason, that the sacrifice of their little capital would merely put off the evil day, and that the persecution would very soon recommence. In this way they would have to suffer as before, and have the additional mortification of feeling that they had spent to no purpose the little that they possessed. Their fatalistic belief in the "perhaps" (*avos'*) came here to their aid. Perhaps the proprietor might become weary of his efforts when he saw that they led to no result, or perhaps something might happen which would remove the persecutor.

It always happened, however, that when a proprietor treated his serfs with extreme injustice and cruelty, some of them lost patience, and sought refuge in flight. As the estates lay perfectly open on all sides, and it was utterly impossible to exercise a strict supervision, nothing was easier than to run away, and the fugitive might be a hundred miles off before his absence was noticed. Why then did not all run away as soon as the master began to oppress them? There were several reasons which made the peasant bear much, rather than adopt this resource. In the first place, he had almost always a wife and family, and he could not possibly take them with

him; flight, therefore, was expatriation for life in its most terrible form. Besides this, the life of a fugitive serf was by no means enviable. He was liable at any moment to fall into the hands of the police, and to be put in prison or sent back to his master. So little charm indeed did this life present that not unfrequently after a few months or a few years the fugitive returned of his own accord to his former domicile.

Regarding fugitives or passportless wanderers in general, I may here remark parenthetically that there were two kinds. In the first place, there was the young, able-bodied peasant, who fled from the oppression of his master or from the conscription. Such a fugitive almost always sought out for himself a new domicile — generally in the southern provinces, where there was a great scarcity of labourers, and where many proprietors habitually welcomed all peasants who presented themselves, without making any inquiries as to passports. In the second place, there were those who chose fugitivism as a permanent mode of life. These were, for the most part, men or women of a certain age — widowers or widows — who had no close family ties, and who were too infirm or too lazy to work. The majority of these assumed the character of pilgrims. As such they could always find enough to eat, and could generally even collect a few roubles with which to grease the palm of any zealous police-officer who should arrest them. For a life of this kind Russia presented, and still presents, peculiar facilities.

There are abundance of monasteries, where all comers may live for three days without any questions being asked, and where those who are willing to do a little work for the patron saint may live for a much longer period. Then there are the towns, where the rich merchants consider almsgiving as very profitable for salvation. And, lastly, there are the villages, where a professing pilgrim is sure to be hospitably received and entertained so long as he refrains from stealing and other acts too grossly inconsistent with his assumed character. For those who contented themselves with simple fare, and did not seek to avoid the usual privations of a wanderer's life, these ordinary means of subsistence were amply sufficient. Those who were more ambitious and more cunning often employed their talents with great success in the world of the Old Ritualists and Sectarians.

The last and most desperate means of defence which the serfs possessed were fire-raising and murder. With regard to the amount of fire-raising there are no trustworthy statistics. With regard to the number of agrarian murders I possessed some interesting statistical data, but have, unfortunately, lost them. I may say, however, that these cases were not very numerous. This is to be explained in part by the patient, long-suffering character of the peasantry, and in part by the fact that the great majority of the proprietors were by no means such inhuman taskmasters as is sometimes supposed. When a case did occur, the Administration always made a strict investigation — punishing the guilty

with exemplary severity, and taking no account of the provocation to which they had been subjected. The peasantry, on the contrary — at least, when the act was not the result of mere personal vengeance — secretly sympathised with "the unfortunates," and long cherished their memory as that of men who had suffered for the *Mir*.

In speaking of the serfs I have hitherto confined my attention to the members of the *Mir*, or rural Commune — that is to say, the peasants in the narrower sense of the term; but besides these there were the Dvoróvuié, or domestic servants, and of these I must add a word or two.

The Dvoróvuié were domestic slaves rather than serfs in the proper sense of the term. Let us, however, avoid wounding unnecessarily Russian sensibilities by the use of the ill-sounding word. We may call the class in question "domestics" — remembering, of course, that they were not quite domestic servants in the ordinary sense. They received no wages, were not at liberty to change masters, possessed almost no legal rights, and might be punished, hired out, or sold by their owners without any infraction of the written law.

These "domestics" were very numerous — out of all proportion to the work to be performed — and could consequently lead a very lazy life; [1] but the peasant considered it a great misfortune to be transferred to their ranks, for he thereby lost his share

[1] Those proprietors who kept orchestras, large packs of hounds, etc., had sometimes several hundred domestic serfs.

of the Communal land and the little independence which he enjoyed. It very rarely happened, however, that the proprietor took an able-bodied peasant as domestic. The class generally kept up its number by the legitimate and illegitimate method of natural increase; and involuntary additions were occasionally made when orphans were left without near relatives, and no other family wished to adopt them. To this class belonged the lackeys, servant-girls, cooks, coachmen, stable-boys, gardeners, and a large number of nondescript old men and women who had no very clearly-defined functions. Those of them who were married and had children occupied a position intermediate between the ordinary domestic servant and the peasant. On the one hand they received from the master a monthly allowance of food and a yearly allowance of clothes, and they were obliged to live in the immediate vicinity of the mansion-house; but on the other hand they had each a separate house or apartment, with a little cabbage-garden, and commonly a small plot of flax. The unmarried ones lived in all respects like ordinary domestic servants.

Of the whole number of serfs belonging to the proprietors, the domestics formed, according to the last census, no less than $6\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. (6.79),[1] and

[1] The whole number of serfs belonging to the proprietors at the time of the Emancipation was 21,625,609:—

Peasant serfs	20,158,231
Domestics	1,467,378

Troinitski, "Krepostnóe Naselénie v Rossíi," p. 57. The difference between these figures and those already given is to be accounted for partly by the increase of population since 1859 and partly by official inaccuracy.

their numbers were evidently rapidly increasing, for in the preceding census they represented only 4.79 per cent. of the whole. This fact seems all the more remarkable when we observe that during this period the number of peasant serfs had diminished from 20,576,229 to 20,158,231.

I must now bring this long chapter to an end, though I feel that I have been able to do little more than sketch roughly in outline the subject which I desired to describe. I have endeavoured to represent serfage in its normal, ordinary forms rather than in its occasional monstrous manifestations. Of these latter I have a collection containing ample materials for a whole series of sensation novels, but I refrain from quoting them, because I do not believe that the criminal annals of a country give a fair representation of its real condition. Imagine an author describing family life in England by the chronicles of the Divorce Court! The method would, of course, seem to all men incredibly absurd, and yet it would not be much more unjust than that of an author who should describe serfage in Russia by those cases of reckless oppression and inhuman cruelty which certainly did sometimes occur, but which as certainly were exceptional. Most foreigners are already, I believe, only too disposed to exaggerate the oppression and cruelty to which serfage gave rise, so that in quoting a number of striking examples I should simply be pandering to that taste for the horrible and the sensational which is for the present in need of no stimulus.

It must not, however, be supposed that in refrain-

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ing from all description of those abuses of authority which the proprietors sometimes practised I am actuated by any desire to whitewash serfage or attenuate its evil consequences. No great body of men could long wield such enormous uncontrolled power without abusing it,[1] and no great body of men could long live under such power without suffering morally and materially from its pernicious influence. And it must be remembered that this pernicious influence affected not only the serfs, but also the proprietors. If serfage did not create that moral apathy and intellectual lethargy which formed, as it were, the atmosphere of Russian provincial life, it did much at least to preserve it. In short, serfage was the chief barrier to all material and moral progress, and it was therefore natural that, in a time of moral awakening such as that which I have described in the preceding chapter, the question of Serf Emancipation at once came to the front.

[1] The number of deposed proprietors — or rather the number of estates placed under curators in consequence of the abuse of authority on the part of their owners — amounted in 1859 to 215. So at least I found in a MS. official document shown to me by Mr. N. A. Milútin.

CHAPTER XI

THE EMANCIPATION OF THE SERFS

IT is a fundamental principle of Russian political organisation that all initiative in public affairs proceeds from the autocratic power. The wide-spread desire, therefore, for the Emancipation of the serfs did not find free expression so long as the Emperor kept silence regarding his intentions. The educated classes watched anxiously for some sign, and soon a sign was given to them. In March, 1856 — a few days after the publication of the manifesto announcing the conclusion of peace with the Western Powers — his Majesty said to the Marshals of Noblesse in Moscow: "For the removal of certain unfounded reports I consider it necessary to declare to you that I have not at present the intention of annihilating serfage; but certainly, as you yourselves know, the existing manner of possessing serfs cannot remain unchanged. It is better to abolish serfage from above than to await the time when it will begin to abolish itself from below. I request you, gentlemen, to consider how this can be put into execution, and to submit my words to the noblesse for their consideration."

These words were intended, it is said, to sound

the noblesse, and induce them to make a voluntary proposal. If such was the intention, the speech had not the desired effect. The magnates of Moscow had very little Abolitionist enthusiasm, and those who really wished to see serfage abolished considered the Imperial utterance too vague and oracular to justify positive action. The excitement caused by the incident soon subsided, and as no further steps were taken for some time, many people assumed that the consideration of the question had been indefinitely postponed. "The Government," it was said, "evidently intended to raise the question, but on perceiving the indifference or hostility of the landed proprietors, became frightened and drew back."

The Emperor was in reality disappointed. He had expected that his "faithful Moscow noblesse," of which he was wont to say he was himself a member, would at once respond to his call, and that the ancient capital would have the honour of beginning the work. And if the example were thus given by Moscow he had no doubt that it would soon be followed by the other provinces. He now perceived that the fundamental principles on which the Emancipation should be effected must be laid down by the Government, and for this purpose he created a secret committee composed of the great officers of State.

This "Chief Committee for Peasant Affairs," as it was afterwards called, devoted six months to studying the history of the question. Proposed Emancipation was by no means a new phenomenon in

Russia. Ever since the time of Catherine II. the Government had attempted to improve the condition of the serfs, and on more than one occasion a general Emancipation had been contemplated. These efforts, though they led to small practical results, had at least the good effect of ripening the question, and of bringing out certain fundamental principles which would necessarily form the basis of all future projects. The chief of these principles was that the State should not consent to any project which would uproot the peasant from the soil and allow him to wander about at will; for such a measure would certainly render the collection of the taxes impossible, and in all probability produce the most frightful agrarian disorders. And to this general principle there was an important corollary: if severe restrictions were to be placed on the free migration of the peasantry, it would be necessary to provide them with land in the immediate vicinity of the villages; otherwise they must inevitably fall back under the power of the proprietors, and a new and worse kind of serfage would thus be created. But in order to give land to the peasantry it would be necessary to take it from the proprietors; and this expropriation seemed to many a most unjustifiable infringement of the sacred right of property. It was this consideration that had formerly restrained Nicholas from taking any decisive measures with regard to serfage; and it had now considerable weight with the members of the committee, who were nearly all great landowners.

Notwithstanding the strenuous exertions of the Grand Duke Constantine, who had been appointed a member for the express purpose of accelerating the proceedings, the committee did not show as much zeal and energy as was desired, and orders were given to take some decided step. A convenient opportunity soon presented itself.

In the Lithuanian Provinces, where the nobles were Polish by origin and sympathies, the miserable condition of the peasantry had induced the Government in the time of Nicholas to limit the arbitrary power of the serf-owners by so-called Inventories, in which the mutual obligations of masters and serfs were regulated and defined. These Inventories had caused great dissatisfaction, and the proprietors now proposed that they should be revised. Of this the Government determined to take advantage. On the somewhat violent assumption that these proprietors wished to emancipate their serfs, an Imperial rescript was prepared, approving of their supposed desire, and empowering them to form committees for the preparation of definite projects.[1] In the rescript itself the word emancipation was studiously avoided, but there could be no doubt as to the implied meaning, for it was expressly stated in the supplementary considerations that "the abolition of serfage must be effected, not suddenly, but gradually." Four days later the Minister of the Interior, in

[1] This celebrated document is known as "The Rescript to Nazímof." More than once in the course of conversation I did all in my power, within the limits of politeness and discretion, to extract from General Nazímof a detailed account of this important episode, but my efforts were unsuccessful.

accordance with a secret order from the Emperor, sent a circular to the Governors and Marshals of Noblesse all over Russia Proper, informing them that the nobles of the Lithuanian Provinces "had recognised the necessity of liberating the peasants," and that "this noble intention" had afforded peculiar satisfaction to his Majesty. A copy of the rescript and the fundamental principles to be observed accompanied the circular, "in case the nobles of other provinces should express a similar desire."

This circular produced an immense sensation throughout the country. No one could for a moment misunderstand the suggestion that the nobles of other provinces *might possibly* express a desire to liberate their serfs. Such vague words, when spoken by an autocrat, have a very definite and unmistakable meaning, which prudent loyal subjects have no difficulty in understanding. If any doubted, their doubts were soon dispelled, for the Emperor, a few weeks later, publicly expressed a hope that, with the help of God and the co-operation of the nobles, the work would be successfully accomplished.

The die was cast, and the Government looked anxiously to see the result.

The periodical Press — which was at once the product and the fomenter of the liberal aspirations — hailed the raising of the question with boundless enthusiasm. The Emancipation, it was said, would certainly open a new and glorious epoch in the national history. Serfage was described as an ulcer

that had long been poisoning the national blood; as an enormous weight under which the whole nation groaned; as an insurmountable obstacle, preventing all material and moral progress; as a cumbrous load, which rendered all free, vigorous action impossible, and prevented Russia from rising to the level of the Western nations. If Russia had succeeded in stemming the flood of adverse fortune in spite of this millstone round her neck, what might she not accomplish when free and untrammelled? All sections of the literary world had arguments to offer in support of the foregone conclusion. The moralists declared that all the prevailing vices were the product of serfage, and that moral progress was impossible in an atmosphere of slavery; the lawyers asserted that the arbitrary authority of the proprietors over the peasants had no firm legal basis; the economists explained that free labour was an indispensable condition of industrial and commercial prosperity; the philosophical historians showed that the normal historical development of the country demanded the immediate abolition of this superannuated remnant of barbarism; and the writers of the sentimental, gushing type poured forth endless effusions about brotherly love to the weak and the oppressed. In a word, the Press was for the moment unanimous, and displayed a feverish excitement which demanded a liberal use of superlatives.

This enthusiastic tone accorded perfectly with the feelings of a large section of the nobles. Nearly the whole of the noblesse was more or less affected

by the new-born enthusiasm for everything just, humanitarian, and liberal. The aspirations found, of course, their most ardent representatives among the educated youth; but they were by no means confined to the younger men, who had passed through the universities and had always regarded serfage as a stain on the national honour. Many a Saul was found among the prophets. Many an old man, with grey hairs and grandchildren, who had all his life placidly enjoyed the fruits of serf labour, was now heard to speak of serfage as an antiquated institution which could not be reconciled with modern humanitarian ideas; and not a few of all ages, who had formerly never thought of reading books or newspapers, now perused assiduously the periodical literature, and picked up the liberal and humanitarian phrases with which it was filled.

This Abolitionist fervour was considerably augmented by certain political aspirations which did not appear in the newspapers, but which were at that time very generally entertained. In spite of the Press censure a large section of the educated classes had become acquainted with the political literature of France and Germany, and had imbibed therefrom an unbounded admiration for constitutional government. A constitution, it was thought, would necessarily remove all political evils and create something like a political millennium. And it was not to be a constitution of the ordinary sort — the fruit of compromise between hostile political parties — but an institution designed calmly according to the

latest results of political science, and so constructed that all classes would voluntarily contribute to the general welfare. The necessary prelude to this happy era of political liberty was, of course, the abolition of serfage. The nobles would voluntarily give up their power over their serfs, and receive a Constitution as an indemnification and reward.

There were, however, many nobles of the old school, who remained impervious to all these new feelings and ideas. On them the raising of the Emancipation question had a very different effect. They had no source of revenue but their estates, and they could not conceive the possibility of working their estates without serf labour. If the peasant was indolent and careless even under strict supervision, what would he become when no longer under the authority of a master? If the profits from farming were already small, what would they be when no one would work without wages? And this was not the worst, for it was quite evident from the circular that the land question was to be raised, and that a considerable portion of each estate would be transferred, at least for a time, to the emancipated peasants.

To the proprietors who looked at the question in this way the prospect of Emancipation was certainly not at all agreeable, but we must not imagine that they felt as English landowners would feel if threatened by a similar danger. In England an hereditary estate has for the family a value far beyond what it would bring in the market. It is

regarded as one and indivisible, and any dismemberment of it would be looked upon as a grave family misfortune. In Russia, on the contrary, estates have nothing of this semi-sacred character, and may be at any time dismembered without outraging family feeling or traditional associations. Indeed, it is a general rule that when a proprietor dies, leaving only one estate and several children, the property is broken up into fractions and divided among the heirs. Even the prospect of pecuniary sacrifice did not alarm the Russians so much as it would alarm Englishmen. Men who keep no accounts and take little thought for the morrow are much less averse to making pecuniary sacrifices — whether for a wise or a foolish purpose — than those who carefully arrange their mode of life according to their income.

Still, after due allowance has been made for these peculiarities, it must be admitted that the feeling of dissatisfaction and alarm was very wide-spread. Even Russians do not like the prospect of losing a part of their land and income. No protest, however, was entered, and no opposition was made. Those who were hostile to the measure were ashamed to show themselves selfish and unpatriotic. At the same time they knew very well that the Emperor, if he wished, could effect the Emancipation in spite of them, and that resistance on their part would draw down upon them the Imperial displeasure, without affording any compensating advantage. They knew, too, that there was a danger from below, so that any useless show of opposition would be like play-

ing with matches in a powder-magazine. The serfs already expected, and would soon know, that the Tsar desired to set them free, and they might, if they suspected that the proprietors were trying to frustrate the Tsar's benevolent intentions, use violent measures to get rid of the opposition. The idea of agrarian massacres had already taken possession of many timid minds. Besides this, all classes of the proprietors felt that if the work was to be done, it should be done by the noblesse and not by the bureaucracy. If it were effected by the nobles the interests of the landowners would be duly considered, but if it were effected by the Administration without their concurrence and co-operation, their interests would be neglected, and there would inevitably be an enormous amount of jobbery and corruption. In accordance with this view the noblesse corporations of the various provinces successively requested permission to form committees for the consideration of the question, and during the year 1858 a committee was opened in almost every province in which serfage existed.

In this way the question was apparently handed over for solution to the nobles, but in reality the noblesse was called upon merely to advise, and not to legislate. The Government not only laid down the fundamental principles of the scheme, and continually exercised a considerable influence over the work of construction; it at the same time reserved to itself the right of modifying or rejecting the projects proposed by the committees.

According to these fundamental principles the serfs should be emancipated gradually, so that for some time they would remain attached to the glebe and subject to the authority of the proprietors. During this transition period they should redeem by money payments or labour their houses and gardens, and enjoy in usufruct a certain quantity of land, sufficient to enable them to support themselves, and to fulfil their obligations to the State as well as to the proprietor. In return for this land they should pay a yearly rent in money, produce, or labour, over and above the yearly sum paid for the redemption of their houses and gardens. As to what should be done after the expiry of the transition period, the Government seems to have had no clearly-conceived intentions. Probably it hoped that by that time the proprietors and their emancipated serfs would have invented some convenient *modus vivendi*, and that nothing but a little legislative regulation would be necessary. But radical legislation is like the letting-out of water. These fundamental principles, adopted at first with a view to mere immediate practical necessity, soon acquired a very different significance. To understand this we must turn for a moment to the periodical literature.

Until the serf question came to be discussed, the reform aspirations were very vague, and consequently there was a remarkable unanimity among their representatives. The educated classes thought that Russia should at once adopt from the West all those liberal principles and institutions, the exclu-

sion of which had prevented the country from rising to the level of the Western nations. But very soon symptoms of a schism became apparent. Whilst the literature in general was still preaching the doctrine that Russia should adopt everything that was "liberal," a few voices began to be heard warning the unwary that much which bore the name of liberal was in reality already antiquated and worthless — that Russia ought not to follow blindly in the footsteps of other nations, but ought rather to profit by their experience, and avoid the errors into which they had fallen. The chief of these errors was, according to these new teachers, the abnormal development of individualism — in other words, the adoption of that principle of *laissez faire, laissez passer*, which forms the basis of what may be called the Orthodox School of Political Economists. Individualism and unrestricted competition, it was said, have now reached in the West an abnormal and monstrous development. Supported by the *laissez faire* principle they have led — and must always lead — to the oppression of the weak, the tyranny of capital, the impoverishment of the masses for the benefit of the few, and the formation of a hungry, dangerous Proletariate! This has already been recognised by the most advanced thinkers of France and Germany. If these old countries cannot at once cure those evils, that is no reason for Russia to inoculate herself with them. She is still at the commencement of her career, and it would be insane folly for her to wander voluntarily for ages in the

Desert, when a direct route to the Promised Land has been already discovered.

The Russians have a peculiar way of treating political and social questions. Having received their political education from books, they naturally attribute to theoretical considerations an importance which seems to us exaggerated. When any important or trivial question arises, they at once launch into the sea of philosophical principles, and pay less attention to the little objects close at hand than to the big ones that appear on the distant horizon of the future. And when they set to work at any political reform they begin *ab ovo*. As they have no traditional prejudices to fetter them, and no traditional principles to lead them, they naturally take for their guidance the latest conclusions of political philosophy.

Bearing this in mind, let us see how it affected the Emancipation question. The Proletariate — described as a dangerous monster which was about to swallow up society in Western Europe, and which might at any moment cross the frontier unless kept out by vigorous measures — took possession of the popular imagination, and aroused the fears of the reading public. To the more intelligent part of that public it seemed that the best means of preventing the formation of a Proletariate in Russia was the transfer of land to the emancipated serfs, and the careful preservation of the rural Commune. "Now is the moment," it was said, "for deciding the important question whether Russia is to fall a prey,

like the Western nations, to this terrible evil, or whether she is to protect herself for ever against it. In the decision of this question lies the future destiny of the country. If the peasants be emancipated without land, or if those Communal institutions, which give to every man a share of the soil and secure this inestimable boon for the generations still unborn, be now abolished, a Proletariate will be rapidly formed, and the peasantry will become a disorganised mass of homeless wanderers like the English agricultural labourers. If, on the contrary, a fair share of land be granted to them, and if the Commune be made proprietor of the land ceded, the danger of a Proletariate is for ever removed, and Russia will thereby set an example to the civilised world! Never has a nation had such an opportunity of making an enormous leap forward on the road of progress, and never again will the opportunity occur. The Western nations have discovered their error when it is too late — when the peasantry have been already deprived of their land, and the labouring classes of the towns have already fallen a prey to the insatiable cupidity of the capitalists. In vain their most eminent thinkers warn and exhort. Ordinary remedies are no longer of any avail. But Russia may avoid all these dangers, if she but act wisely and prudently in this great matter. The peasants are still in actual, if not legal, possession of the land, and there is as yet no Proletariate in the towns. All that is necessary, therefore, is to abolish the arbitrary authority of the proprietors without

expropriating the peasants, and without disturbing the existing Communal institutions, which form the best barrier against pauperism."

These ideas were warmly espoused by many proprietors, and exercised a very great influence on the deliberations of the Provincial Committees. In these committees there were generally two groups. The majorities, whilst making large concessions to the claims of justice and expediency, endeavoured to defend, as far as possible, the interests of their class; the minorities, though by no means indifferent to the interests of the class to which they belonged, allowed the more abstract theoretical considerations to be predominant. At first the majorities did all in their power to evade the fundamental principles laid down by the Government as much too favourable to the peasantry; but when they perceived that public opinion, as represented by the Press, went much further than the Government had ventured to go, they clung to these fundamental principles — which secured at least the property of the land to the proprietor — as their anchor of safety. Between the two parties arose naturally a violent spirit of hostility, and the Government found it advisable to decide that both should present their projects for consideration.

In a country governed by genuine representative institutions the legal status of the peasantry, and their relations to the proprietors, are matters of vital political importance, and determine to a great extent the balance of political power. The subject

is, therefore, well fitted to awaken class-feeling and traditional class-enmity; and we may be sure that if it were submitted to the noblesse of any country in Western Europe, the political element would occupy a very prominent place in the discussions. Not so in Russia. Under the sceptre of the Tsars, as I have already explained, the social classes have never been allowed to fight out their own battles, and they have consequently no feelings of rivalry or enmity towards each other. As to the political power, it has been for centuries in the hands of the Autocrats, and likely to remain there for a long time to come. Many proprietors, it is true, imagined that the Emperor was about to create a parliament and to grant a constitution; but those who indulged in such expectations were animated with a sentimental democratic spirit, and believed that under the constitutional régime nobles and peasants would act together in fraternal harmony. Political questions retired, therefore, to the background, and the great majority of the proprietors confined their attention to the less elevated questions which dealt with the matter of daily bread. Not only was serf labour to be abolished, but the villages, with the land on which they stood, were to be permanently separated from the estates, and a large part of the arable land was to be transferred in usufruct for an indefinite time to the emancipated peasantry. In the presence of such an important practical change in their daily life, the proprietors had little time or inclination to think of the bal-

ance of political power in the future or similar remote contingencies, and the discussions turned chiefly on the amount of land to be ceded, and the compensation to be received.

As the Provincial Committees worked independently, there was considerable diversity in the conclusions at which they arrived. The task of codifying these conclusions, and elaborating out of them a general scheme of Emancipation, was entrusted to a special Imperial Commission, composed partly of officials and partly of landed proprietors named by the Emperor.[1] Those who believed that the question had really been handed over to the noblesse assumed that this Commission would merely arrange the materials presented by the Provincial Committees, and that the Emancipation Law would thereafter be elaborated by a national assembly of deputies elected by the nobles. In reality the Commission, working in St. Petersburg under the direct guidance and control of the Government, fulfilled a very different and much more important function. Using the combined projects merely as a store-house from which it could draw the proposals it desired, it formed a new project of its own, which ultimately received, after undergoing modification in detail, the Imperial assent. Instead of being a mere *chancellerie*, as many supposed, it became in a certain sense the author of the Emancipation Law.

[1] Known as the Redaktsiónnaya Komissiya, or Elaboration Commission. Strictly speaking there were two, but they are commonly spoken of as one.

There were in nearly all the Provincial Committees a majority and a minority, the former of which strove to defend the interests of the proprietors, whilst the latter paid more attention to theoretical considerations and endeavoured to secure for the peasantry a large amount of land, Communal independence, and self-government. In the Commission there were the same two parties, but their relative strength was very different. Here the men of theory, instead of forming a minority, were more numerous than their opponents, and enjoyed the support of the Government, which supplied them with instructions for their guidance. In these instructions we see how much the question had ripened under the influence of the theoretical considerations. There is no longer any trace of the idea that the Emancipation should be gradual; on the contrary, it is expressly declared that the immediate effect of the law should be the complete abolition of the proprietor's authority. There is even evidence of a clear intention of removing the proprietor as far as possible from having any influence over his former serfs. The former sharp distinction between the land occupied by the village and the arable land to be ceded in usufruct likewise disappears, and it is merely said that efforts should be made to enable the peasants to become proprietors of the land they required. A few months later it was decided by the Emperor that the Communal usufruct should be perpetual, and that facilities should be given to the peasantry for redeeming this land.

The aim of the Government had thus become clear and well defined. The task to be performed was to transform the serfs at once, and with the least possible disturbance of the existing economic conditions, into a class of small Communal proprietors — that is to say, a class of free peasants possessing a house and garden, and a share of the Communal land. To effect this it was merely necessary to declare the serf personally free, to draw a clear line of demarcation between the Communal land and the rest of the estate, and to determine the price or rent which should be paid for this Communal property, inclusive of the land on which the village was built.

The law was prepared in strict accordance with these principles. As to the amount of land to be ceded, it was decided that the existing arrangements, founded on experience, should, as a general rule, be preserved — in other words, the land actually enjoyed by the peasants should be retained by them; and in order to prevent extreme cases of injustice, a maximum and a minimum were fixed for each district. In like manner, as to the dues, it was decided that the existing arrangements should be taken as the basis of the calculation, but that the sum should be modified according to the amount of land ceded. At the same time facilities were to be given for the transforming of the labour dues into yearly money payments, and for enabling the peasants to redeem them, with the assistance of the Government in the form of credit.

This idea of redemption created, at first, a feeling of alarm among the proprietors. It was bad enough to be obliged to cede a large part of the estates in usufruct, but it seemed much worse to have to sell it. Redemption appeared to be a species of wholesale confiscation. But very soon it became evident that the redeeming of the land was profitable for both parties. Cession in perpetual usufruct was felt to be in reality tantamount to alienation of the land, whilst the immediate redemption would enable the proprietors, who had generally little or no ready money, to pay their debts, to clear their estates from mortgages, and to make the outlays necessary for the transition to free labour. The majority of the proprietors, therefore, said openly: "Let the Government give us a suitable compensation in money for the land that is taken from us, so that we may be at once freed from all further trouble and annoyance."

When it became known that the Commission was not merely arranging and codifying the materials, but elaborating a law of its own and regularly submitting its decisions for Imperial confirmation, a feeling of dissatisfaction appeared all over the country. The nobles perceived that the question was being taken out of their hands, and was being solved by a small body composed of bureaucrats and nominees of the Government. After having made a voluntary sacrifice of their rights, they were being unceremoniously pushed aside! They had still, however, the means of correcting this.

The Emperor had publicly promised that before the project should become law, deputies from the Provincial Committees should be summoned to St. Petersburg to make objections and propose amendments.

The Commission and the Government would have willingly dispensed with all further advice from the nobles, but it was necessary to redeem the Imperial promise. Deputies were therefore summoned to the Capital, but they were not allowed to form, as they hoped, a public assembly for the discussion of the question. All their efforts to hold meetings were frustrated, and they were required merely to answer in writing a list of printed questions regarding matters of detail. The fundamental principles, they were told, had already received the Imperial sanction, and were consequently removed from discussion. Those who desired to discuss details were invited individually to attend meetings of the Commission, where they found one or two members ready to engage with them in a little dialectical fencing. This, of course, did not give much satisfaction. Indeed, the ironical tone in which the fencing was too often conducted served to increase the existing irritation. It was only too evident that the Commission had triumphed, and some of the members could justly boast that they had drowned the deputies in ink, and buried them under reams of paper.

Believing, or at least professing to believe, that the Emperor was being deceived in this matter by

the Administration, several groups of deputies presented petitions to his Majesty containing a respectful protest against the manner in which they had been treated. But by this act they simply laid themselves open to "the most unkindest cut of all." Those who had signed the petitions received a formal reprimand through the police!

This treatment of the deputies, and, above all, this gratuitous insult, produced among the nobles a storm of indignation. They felt that they had been entrapped! The Government had artfully induced them to form projects for the emancipation of their serfs, and now, after having been used as a cat's-paw in the work of their own spoliation, they were being unceremoniously pushed aside as no longer necessary! Those who had indulged in the hope of gaining political rights felt the blow most keenly. A first gentle and respectful attempt at remonstrance had been answered by a dictatorial reprimand through the police! Instead of being called to take an active part in home and foreign politics, they were being treated as naughty school-boys. In view of this insult all differences of opinion were for the moment forgotten, and all parties resolved to join in a vigorous protest against the insolence and arbitrary conduct of the bureaucracy.

A convenient opportunity of making this protest in a legal way was offered by the triennial Provincial Assemblies soon about to be held in several provinces. So at least it was thought, but here again

the Administration checkmated the noblesse. Before the opening of the Assemblies a circular was issued prohibiting them from touching the Emancipation question! Some Assemblies, however, evaded this order, and succeeded in making a little demonstration by submitting to his Majesty that the time had arrived for other reforms, such as the separation of the administrative and judicial powers, and the creation of local self-government, public judicial procedure, and trial by jury.

All these reforms were voluntarily effected by the Emperor a few years later, but the manner in which they were suggested seemed to savour of insubordination, and was a flagrant infraction of the principle that all initiative in public affairs should proceed from the central Government. New measures of repression were accordingly used. Some Marshals of Noblesse were reprimanded and others deposed. Of the conspicuous leaders, two were exiled to distant provinces and others placed under the surveillance of the police. Worst of all, the whole agitation strengthened the Commission by convincing the Emperor that the majority of the nobles were hostile to his benevolent plans.[1]

When the Commission had finished its labours, its chief project passed to the two higher instances — the Committee for Peasant Affairs and the Council of State — and in both of these the Emperor declared

[1] This was a misinterpretation of the facts. Very many of those who joined in the protest sincerely sympathised with the idea of Emancipation, and were ready to be even more "liberal" than the Government.

plainly that he could allow no fundamental changes. From all the members he demanded a complete forgetfulness of former differences and a conscientious execution of his orders; "for you must remember," he significantly added, "that in Russia laws are made by the autocratic power." From an historical review of the question he drew the conclusion that "the autocratic power created serfage, and the autocratic power ought to abolish it." On February 19th, 1861, the law was signed, and by that act more than twenty millions of serfs were liberated.[1] A Manifesto containing the fundamental principles of the law was at once sent all over the country, and an order was given that it should be read in all the churches.

The three fundamental principles laid down by the law were:

1. That the serfs should at once receive the civil rights of the free rural classes, and that the authority of the proprietor should be replaced by Communal self-government.

2. That the rural Communes should as far as possible retain the land they actually held, and should

[1] It is sometimes said — as, for instance, by Mr. Gladstone, in the *Contemporary Review* for November, 1876 — that forty millions of serfs have been emancipated. The statement is true, if we regard the State Peasants as serfs. They held, as I have already explained, an intermediate position between serfage and freedom. The peculiar administration under which they lived was partly abolished by Imperial Orders of September 7th, 1859, and October 23rd, 1861. In 1866 they were placed, as regards administration, on a level with the emancipated serfs of the proprietors. As a general rule, they possess rather more land and have to pay somewhat lighter dues than the emancipated serfs in the narrower sense of the term.

in return pay to the proprietor certain yearly dues in money or labour.

3. That the Government should by means of credit assist the Communes to redeem these dues, or, in other words, to purchase the lands ceded to them in usufruct.

With regard to the domestic serfs, it was enacted that they should continue to serve their masters during two years, and that thereafter they should be completely free, but they should have no claim to a share of the land.

It might be reasonably supposed that the serfs received with boundless gratitude and delight the Manifesto proclaiming these principles. Here at last was the realisation of their long-cherished hopes. Liberty was accorded to them, and not only liberty, but a goodly portion of the soil — more than a half of all the arable land possessed by the proprietors.

In reality the Manifesto created among the peasantry a feeling of disappointment rather than delight. To understand this strange fact we must endeavour to place ourselves at the peasant's point of view.

In the first place it must be remarked that all vague, rhetorical phrases about free labour, human dignity, national progress, and the like, which may readily produce among educated men a certain amount of temporary enthusiasm, fall on the ears of the Russian peasant like drops of rain on a granite rock. The fashionable rhetoric of philosophical liberalism is as incomprehensible to him as the flowery circumlocutionary style of an Oriental scribe would be to a keen

city merchant. The idea of liberty in the abstract and the mention of rights which lie beyond the sphere of his ordinary everyday life awaken no enthusiasm in his breast. And for mere names he has a profound indifference. What matters it to him that he is officially called, not a "serf," but a "free village inhabitant," if the change in official terminology is not accompanied by some immediate material advantage? What he wants is a house to live in, food to eat, and raiment wherewithal to be clothed, and to gain these first necessaries of life with as little labour as possible. If, therefore, the Government would make a law by which his share of the Communal land would be increased, or his share of the Communal burdens diminished, he would in return willingly consent to be therein designated by the most ugly name that learned ingenuity could devise. Thus the sentimental considerations which had such an important influence on the educated classes had no hold whatever on the mind of the peasants. They looked at the question exclusively from two points of view — that of historical right and that of material advantage — and from both of these the Emancipation Law seemed to offer no satisfactory solution of the question.

On the subject of historical right the peasantry had their own traditional conceptions, which were completely at variance with the written law. According to the positive legislation the Communal land formed part of the estate, and consequently belonged to the proprietor; but according to the

conceptions of the peasantry it belonged to the Commune, and the right of the proprietor consisted merely in that personal authority over the serfs which had been conferred on him by the Tsar. The peasants could not, of course, put these conceptions into a strict legal form, but they often expressed them in their own homely laconic way by saying to their master, "Mui vashi no zemlyá nasha" — that is to say, "We are yours, but the land is ours." And it must be admitted that this view, though legally untenable, had a certain historical justification. In old times the nobles had held their land by feudal tenure, and were liable to be ejected as soon as they did not fulfil their obligations to the State. These obligations had been long since abolished, and the feudal tenure transformed into an unconditional right of property, but the peasants clung to the old ideas in a way that strikingly illustrates the vitality of deep-rooted popular conceptions. In their minds the proprietors were merely temporary occupants, who were allowed by the Tsar to exact labour and dues from the serfs. What then was Emancipation? Certainly the abolition of all obligatory labour and money dues, and perhaps the complete ejectment of the proprietors. On this latter point there was a difference of opinion. All assumed, as a matter of course, that the Communal land would remain the property of the Commune, but it was not so clear what would be done with the rest of the estate. Some thought that it would be retained by the proprietor, but very many

believed that the nobles would receive salaries from the Tsar, and that *all* the land would be given to the Communes. In this way the Emancipation would be in accordance with historical right and with the material advantage of the peasantry, for whose exclusive benefit, it was assumed, the reform had been undertaken.

Instead of this the peasants found that they were still to pay dues, even for the Communal land which they regarded as unquestionably their own! So at least said the expounders of the law. But the thing was incredible. Either the proprietors must be concealing or misinterpreting the law, or this was merely a preparatory measure, which would be followed by the real Emancipation. Thus were awakened among the peasantry a spirit of mistrust and suspicion and a wide-spread belief that there would be a second Emancipation, by which all the land would be divided and all the dues abolished.

On the nobles the Manifesto made a very different impression. The fact that they were to be entrusted with the putting of the law into execution, and the flattering allusions made to the spirit of generous self-sacrifice which they had exhibited, kindled amongst them enthusiasm enough to make them forget for a time their just grievances and their hostility towards the bureaucracy. They found that the conditions on which the Emancipation was effected were by no means so ruinous as they had anticipated; and the Emperor's appeal to their generosity and patriotism made many of them

throw themselves with ardour into the important task confided to them.

Unfortunately they could not at once begin the work. The law had been so hurried through the last stages that the preparations for putting it into execution were by no means complete when the Manifesto was published. The task of regulating the future relations between the proprietors and the peasantry was entrusted to local proprietors in each district, who were to be called Arbiters of the Peace (*Mirovuié Posrédniki*); but three months elapsed before these Arbiters could be appointed. During that time there was no one to explain the law to the peasants and settle the disputes between them and the proprietors; and the consequence of this was that many cases of insubordination and disorder occurred. The peasants naturally imagined that, as soon as the Tsar said they were free, they were no longer obliged to work for their old masters — that all obligatory labour ceased as soon as the Manifesto was read. In vain the proprietors endeavoured to convince them that, in regard to labour, the old relations must continue, as the law enjoined, until a new arrangement had been made. To all explanations and exhortations the peasants turned a deaf ear, and to the efforts of the rural police they too often opposed a dogged, passive resistance. In many cases the simple appearance of the authorities sufficed to restore order, for the presence of one of the Tsar's servants convinced many that the order to work for the present as for-

merly was not a mere invention of the proprietors. But not unfrequently the birch had to be applied. Indeed, I am inclined to believe, from the numerous descriptions of this time which I have received from eye-witnesses, that rarely, if ever, had the serfs seen and experienced so much flogging as during these first three months after their liberation. Sometimes even the troops had to be called out, and on three occasions they fired on the peasants with ball cartridge. In the most serious case, where a young peasant had set up for a prophet and declared that the Emancipation Law was a forgery, fifty-one peasants were killed and seventy-seven were more or less seriously wounded. But in spite of these lamentable incidents, there was nothing which even the most violent alarmist could dignify with the name of an insurrection. Nowhere was there anything that could be called organised resistance. Even in the case above alluded to, the 3,000 peasants on whom the troops fired were entirely unarmed, made no attempt to resist, and dispersed in the utmost haste as soon as they discovered that they were being shot down. Had the military authorities shown a little more judgment, tact, and patience, the history of the Emancipation would not have been stained even with those three solitary cases of unnecessary bloodshed.

This interregnum between the reigns of serfage and liberty was brought to an end by the appointment of the Arbiters of the Peace. Their first duty was to explain the law, and to organise the new self-

government of the peasantry. The lowest instance or primary organ of this self-government, the rural Commune, already existed, and at once recovered much of its ancient vitality as soon as the authority and interference of the proprietors were removed. The second instance, the Vólost — a territorial administrative unit comprising several contiguous Communes — had to be created, for nothing of the kind had previously existed on the estates of the nobles. It had existed, however, for nearly a quarter of a century among the peasants of the Demesnes, and it was therefore necessary merely to copy an already existing model.

As soon as all the Vólosts in his district had been thus organised, the Arbiter had to undertake the much more arduous task of regulating the agrarian relations between the proprietors and the Communes — with the individual peasants, be it remembered, the proprietors had no direct relations whatever. It had been enacted by the law that the future agrarian relations between the two parties should be left, as far as possible, to voluntary contract; and accordingly each proprietor was invited to come to an agreement with the Commune or Communes on his estate. On the ground of this agreement a statute-charter (*ustávnaya grámota*) was prepared, specifying the number of male serfs, the quantity of land actually enjoyed by them, any proposed changes in this amount, the dues proposed to be levied, and other details. If the Arbiter found that the conditions were in accordance with the law and clearly under-

stood by the peasants, he confirmed the charter, and the arrangement was complete. When the two parties could not come to an agreement within a year, he prepared a charter according to his own judgment, and presented it for confirmation to the higher authorities.

The dissolution of partnership, if it be allowed to use such a term, between the proprietor and his serfs was sometimes very easy and sometimes very difficult. On many estates the charter did little more than legalise the existing arrangements, but in many instances it was necessary to add to, or subtract from, the amount of Communal land, and sometimes it was even necessary to remove the village to another part of the estate. In all cases there were, of course, conflicting interests and complicated questions, so that the Arbiter had always abundance of difficult work. Besides this, he had to act as mediator in those differences which naturally arose during the transition period, when the authority of the proprietor had been abolished but the separation of the two classes had not yet been effected. The unlimited patriarchal authority which had been formerly wielded by the proprietor or his steward now passed with certain restrictions into the hands of the Arbiters, and these peacemakers had to spend a great part of their time in driving about from one estate to another to put an end to alleged cases of insubordination — some of which, it must be admitted, existed only in the imagination of the proprietors.

At first the work of amicable settlement proceeded

slowly. The proprietors generally showed a spirit of concession, and some of them generously proposed conditions much more favourable to the peasants than the law demanded; but the peasants were filled with vague suspicions, and feared to commit themselves by "putting pen to paper." Even the highly-respected proprietors, who imagined that they possessed the unbounded confidence of the peasantry, were suspected like the others, and their generous offers were regarded as well-baited traps. Often I have heard old men, sometimes with tears in their eyes, describe the distrust and ingratitude of the peasantry at this time. Many peasants believed that the proprietors were hiding the real Emancipation Law, and imaginative or ill-intentioned persons fostered this belief by professing to know what the real law contained. The most absurd rumours were afloat, and whole villages sometimes acted upon them. In the province of Moscow, for instance, one Commune sent a deputation to the proprietor to inform him that, as he had always been a good master, the *Mir* would allow him to retain his house and garden during his lifetime. In another locality it was rumoured that the Tsar sat daily on a golden throne in the Crimea, receiving all peasants who came to him, and giving them as much land as they desired; and in order to take advantage of the Imperial liberality a large body of peasants set out for the place indicated, and advanced quickly till they were stopped by the military!

As an illustration of the illusions in which the

peasantry indulged at this time, I may introduce here one of the many characteristic incidents related to me by gentlemen who had served as Arbiters of the Peace.

In the province of Riazán there was one Commune which had acquired a certain local notoriety for the obstinacy with which it refused all arrangements with the proprietor. My informant, who was Arbiter for the locality, was at last obliged to make a statute-charter for it without its consent. He wished, however, that the peasants should voluntarily accept the arrangement he proposed, and accordingly called them together to talk with them on the subject. After explaining fully the part of the law which related to their case, he asked them what objection they had to make a fair contract with their old master. For some time he received no answer, but gradually by questioning individuals he discovered the cause of their obstinacy: they were firmly convinced that not only the Communal land, but also the rest of the estate, belonged to them. To eradicate this false idea he set himself to reason with them, and the following characteristic dialogue ensued:

Arbiter. "If the Tsar gave all the land to the peasantry, what compensation could he give to the proprietors to whom the land belongs?"

Peasant. "The Tsar will give them salaries according to their service."

Arbiter. "In order to pay these salaries he would require a great deal more money. Where could he get that money? He would have to increase the

taxes, and in that way you would have to pay all the same."

Peasant. "The Tsar can make as much money as he likes."

Arbiter. "If the Tsar can make as much money as he likes, why does he make you pay the poll-tax every year?"

Peasant. "It is not the Tsar that receives the taxes we pay."

Arbiter. "Who then receives them?"

Peasant (*after a little hesitation, and with a knowing smile*). "The officials, of course!"

Gradually, through the efforts of the Arbiters, the peasants came to know better their real position, and the work began to advance more rapidly. But soon it was checked by another influence. By the end of the first year the "liberal," patriotic enthusiasm of the nobles had cooled. All sentimental idyllic tendencies had melted away at the first touch of reality, and those who had imagined that liberty would have an immediately salutary effect on the moral character of the serfs, confessed themselves disappointed. Many complained that the peasants showed themselves greedy and obstinate, stole wood from the forest, allowed their cattle to wander on the proprietor's fields, failed to fulfil their legal obligations, and broke their voluntary engagements. At the same time the fears of an agrarian rising subsided, so that even the timid were tranquillised. From these causes the conciliatory spirit of the proprietors decreased.

The work of conciliating and regulating was thus extremely difficult, but the great majority of the Arbiters showed themselves equal to the task, and displayed an impartiality, tact, and patience beyond all praise. To them Russia is in great part indebted for the peaceful character of the Emancipation. Had they sacrificed the general good to the interests of their class, or had they habitually acted in that stern, administrative, military spirit which caused the instances of bloodshed above referred to, the prophecies of the alarmists would, in all probability, have been realised, and the historian of the Emancipation would have had a terrible list of judicial massacres to record. Fortunately they played the part of mediators, as their name signified, rather than that of administrators in the bureaucratic sense of the term, and they were animated with a just and humane rather than a merely legal spirit. Instead of simply laying down the law, and ordering their decisions to be immediately executed, they were ever ready to spend hours in trying to conquer, by patient and laborious reasoning, the unjust claims of proprietors or the false conceptions and ignorant obstinacy of the peasants. It was a new spectacle for Russia to see a public function filled by conscientious men who had their heart in their work, who sought neither promotion nor decorations, and who paid less attention to the punctilious observance of prescribed formalities than to the real objects in view.

There were, it is true, a few men to whom this description does not apply. Some of these were

unduly under the influence of the feelings and conceptions created by serfage. Some, on the contrary, erred on the other side. Desirous of securing the future welfare of the peasantry and of gaining for themselves a certain kind of popularity, and at the same time animated with a violent spirit of pseudo-liberalism, these latter occasionally forgot that their duty was to be, not generous, but just, and that they had no right to practise generosity at other people's expense. All this I am quite aware of — I could even name one or two Arbiters who were guilty of positive dishonesty — but I hold that these were rare exceptions. The great majority did their duty faithfully and well.

The work of concluding contracts for the redemption of the dues, or, in other words, for the purchase of the land ceded in perpetual usufruct, proceeded slowly, and is, in fact, still going on. The arrangement was as follows: The dues were capitalised at six per cent., and the Government paid at once to the proprietors four-fifths of the whole sum. The peasants were to pay to the proprietor the remaining fifth, either at once or in instalments, and to the Government six per cent. for forty-nine years on the sum advanced. The proprietors willingly adopted this arrangement, for it provided them with a sum of ready money, and freed them from the difficult task of collecting the dues. But the peasants did not show much desire to undertake the operation. Some of them expected a second emancipation, and those who did not take this possibility into their calcula-

tions were little disposed to make present sacrifices for distant prospective advantages which would not be realised for half a century. In most cases the proprietor was obliged to remit, in whole or in part, the fifth which was to be paid by the peasants. Many Communes refused to undertake the operation on any conditions, and in consequence of this not a few proprietors demanded the so-called obligatory redemption, according to which they accepted the four-fifths from the Government as full payment, and the operation was thus effected without the peasants being consulted. The total number of *male* serfs emancipated was about nine millions and three-quarters,[1] and of these, only about seven millions and a quarter had already, at the beginning of 1875, made redemption contracts. Of the contracts signed at that time, about sixty-three per cent. were "obligatory."

The serfs were thus not only liberated, but also made possessors of land and put on the road to becoming Communal proprietors, and the old Communal institutions were preserved and developed. In answer to the question, Who effected this gigantic reform? we may say that the chief merit undoubtedly belongs to the Emperor. Had he not possessed a very great amount of courage he would neither have raised the question nor allowed it to be raised by others, and had he not shown a decision and energy of which no one suspected him to be capable, the solution would have been indefinitely postponed.

[1] This does not include the domestic serfs, who did not receive land.

Among the members of his own family he found an able and energetic assistant in his brother, the Grand Duke Constantine — a man who would be remarkable in any sphere of life — and a warm sympathiser with the cause in the Grand Duchess Helena, a German Princess, thoroughly devoted to the welfare of her adopted country. But we must not overlook the important part played by the nobles. Their conduct was very characteristic. As soon as the question was raised, a large number of proprietors threw themselves enthusiastically into the work, and as soon as it became evident that emancipation was inevitable, all made a holocaust of their ancient rights, and demanded to be liberated at once from all relations with the serfs. And when the law was passed it was the proprietors who faithfully put it into execution. Lastly, we should remember that considerable merit is due to the peasantry for the patience and long-suffering which they displayed, as soon as they understood the law. Thus it may justly be said that the Emancipation was not the work of one man, or one party, or one class, but of the nation as a whole.[1]

[1] The names most commonly associated with the Emancipation are General Rostóftsef, Lanskói (Minister of the Interior), Nicholas Milútin, Prince Tcherkassky, G. Samárin, Kosheléf. Many others, such as I. A. Soloviéf, Zhukofski, Domontovitch, Girs, are less known, but did valuable work. To all of these, with the exception of the first two, who died before my arrival in Russia, I have to confess my obligations. The late Nicholas Milútin rendered me special service by putting at my disposal not only all the official papers in his possession, but also many documents of a more private kind. By his early and lamented death Russia lost one of the greatest statesmen which she has yet produced.

CHAPTER XII

CONSEQUENCES OF THE EMANCIPATION

A. — FOR THE LANDED PROPRIETORS

WHEN the Emancipation question was first raised there was a considerable diversity of opinion as to the effect which the abolition of serfage would have on the material interests of the landowners. The Press in general, and a large number of those who may be called "the young generation," took an optimistic view of the matter, and endeavoured to prove that the proposed change would be beneficial alike to proprietors and to peasants. Science, it was said, has long since decided that free labour is immensely more productive than slavery or serfage, and the principle has been already proved to demonstration in the countries of Western Europe. In all these countries modern agricultural progress began with the emancipation of the serfs, and increased productivity was everywhere the immediate result of improvements in the method of culture. Thus the poor light soils of Germany, France, and Holland have been made to produce more than the vaunted "black earth" of Russia. And from these ameliorations the landowning class

has everywhere derived the chief advantages. Are not the landed proprietors of England — the country in which serfage was first abolished — the richest in the world? And is not the proprietor of a few hundred *morgen* in Germany often richer than the Russian noble who has thousands of *dessyatines?* By these and similar plausible arguments the Press endeavoured to prove to the proprietors that they ought, even in their own interest, to undertake the emancipation of the serfs. Many proprietors, however, showed little faith in the abstract principles of political economy and the vague teachings of history as interpreted by the contemporary periodical literature. They could not always refute the ingenious arguments adduced by the men of more sanguine temperament, but they felt convinced that their prospects were not nearly so bright as these men represented them to be. They believed that Russia was a peculiar country, and the Russians a peculiar people. The lower classes in England, France, Holland, and Germany were well known to be laborious and enterprising, whilst the Russian peasant was notoriously lazy, and would certainly, if left to himself, not do more work than was absolutely necessary to keep him from starving. Free labour might be more profitable than serfage in countries where the upper classes possessed traditional practical knowledge and abundance of capital, but in Russia the proprietors had neither the practical knowledge nor the ready money necessary to make the proposed ameliorations in the system

of agriculture, as was clearly shown by the frequent unsuccessful attempts in recent years to introduce the more simple agricultural machines. To all this it was added that a system of emancipation by which the peasants should receive land and be made completely independent of the landed proprietors had nowhere been tried on such a large scale.

There were thus two diametrically opposite opinions regarding the influence which the abolition of serfage would have on the material interests of the landowners, and we have now to examine which of these two opinions has been confirmed by experience.

The reader who has never attempted to make investigations of this kind may naturally imagine that the question may be easily decided by simply consulting a large number of individual proprietors, and drawing a general conclusion from their evidence. In reality the task is much more difficult. As a rule the proprietors cannot state clearly how much they have lost or gained, and when definite information is obtained from them, it is not always trustworthy. In the time of serfage very few of them were in the habit of keeping accurate accounts or accounts of any kind, and when they lived on their estates there were a very large number of items which could not possibly be reduced to figures. Many a man receives now a much larger revenue in money than formerly, and yet he is in a certain sense poorer — that is to say, he finds it much more difficult to live in ease and plenty. Of course every proprietor has a general idea as to whether his position is now better

or worse than it was in the old times, but the vague statements which one often hears made by individuals regarding their former and their actual revenues have little or no scientific value. So many considerations which have nothing to do with purely agrarian relations enter into the calculations that the conclusions do not help us much in our endeavours to estimate the economic results of the Emancipation. And the testimony, it must be confessed, is by no means always unbiassed — especially when it is given to a foreigner. Of those who speak of the Emancipation in an epic or dithyrambic tone, I have noticed that there are two categories: the one desire to prove that the measure was a complete success in every way, and that all classes were benefited by it not only morally but also materially, whilst the others strive to represent the proprietors in general, and themselves in particular, as the self-sacrificing victims of a great and necessary patriotic reform — as martyrs in the cause of liberty and progress. I do not for a moment suppose that these two groups of witnesses have a clearly-conceived intention of deceiving or misleading, but the cautious investigator ought of course to avoid attributing to their testimony more value than it deserves.

We may greatly simplify the problem, as it seems to me, by reducing it to two definite questions:

1. How far were the proprietors *directly* indemnified for the loss of serf labour and for the transfer in usufruct of a large part of their estates to the peasantry?

2. What have the proprietors done with the remainder of their estates, and how far have they been *indirectly* indemnified by the economic changes which have taken place since — and to some extent independently of — the Emancipation?

To the former of these two questions it may be objected that the nobles voluntarily gave up their authority over the peasantry, and received no compensation whatever for the loss of serf labour; and in proof of this assertion several official utterances might be quoted. In reality, however, as I have already explained in a former chapter, many proprietors received actually, if not formally, a considerable amount of compensation; for the legislative power intentionally imposed on a large section of the peasantry annual dues exceeding the normal rent of the land which was transferred to them without their consent.

The problem will be still further simplified if we distinguish carefully between two great agricultural regions. The Forest Zone may be entirely left out of account, for it contained almost no serf-owning landed proprietors. In the whole of the vast province of Archangel, for instance, and in the northern part of the province of Vologda, there were at the time of the Emancipation only six serfs, and they all belonged to nobles who did not possess estates.

Let us begin then with the Southern Agricultural, or Black-Earth Zone, and endeavour to determine how far the proprietors received a fitting compensation for the loss of serf labour and for the compulsory

cession of part of their estates to the emancipated peasantry.

In the northern section of this zone, where the Three-field system of agriculture was in use, the conditions were very favourable for the abolition of serfage. The soil was naturally rich, and still contained a great part of its virgin fertility, so that it could easily supply much more grain than was necessary for the wants of the inhabitants. The agricultural population was sufficient for the cultivation of the land, according to the existing mode of agriculture, and the amount of land ceded to the serfs for their own use might be regarded as a fair remuneration for the labour which they supplied to the owner of the estate. Any proprietor, therefore, who had not been in the habit of imposing undue burdens on his serfs might have liberated them and taken back the land which they enjoyed in usufruct, and he would in all probability have found that he had not thereby made any pecuniary sacrifice. His former serfs would have become his farm-labourers, or would have rented his land for a fair annual sum; and the revenues of the estate would probably have been under this new arrangement at least as large as before. And it must be remarked that this is no mere fanciful supposition. I know of several cases where men who belonged to the merchant class, and who consequently had not the legal right to possess serfs, bought estates and farmed them with a fair profit. In short, the economic conditions in this region were such that serfage was little, if at all,

more profitable than free labour, and therefore we may conclude that for the loss of serf labour the proprietors did not require any compensation. As to the dues, they did not, perhaps, quite represent the full value of the land ceded to the Communes, but the difference between the real and the assumed value was not great. If the proprietors had any just ground of complaint, it was that the inevitable rise in the price of land, which many of them clearly foresaw, was not taken into account.

In the southern section of this zone, where the Steppe system of agriculture was practised, the economic conditions were somewhat different. The population was not nearly so dense, and the supply of labour was consequently not equal to the demand. Serfage had therefore a considerable value, and the landowners were not at all indemnified for its abolition, for the peasants of this region received a large quantity of land, and certainly did not require to pay more for it than it was worth.

Passing now to the Northern Agricultural Zone, we find that the labour of the serfs was for other reasons still more necessary for the proprietors. Here the soil was poor, and so much exhausted that it did not give a fair remuneration for the labour expended on it. So far, therefore, as the proprietors were concerned, agriculture was founded, not on the natural economic conditions, but on the artificial basis of serf labour. Thus the proprietors, in being deprived of serf labour, were deprived of their most valuable possession; but they were partly indemni-

fied for this loss by the annual dues, which greatly exceeded the normal rent of the land ceded to the Communes.

In the central part of this region, serfage had not only outlived its time, but had lost to a great extent its original character, and had entered on a new stage of development. In the original, normal form of the institution — if I may use such an expression — the peasants tilled the proprietor's land, and received as a remuneration for the labour supplied a certain quantity of land for their own use. In the form which it had assumed in these north-central provinces, the proprietor no longer employed all his serfs for agriculture, but allowed a large part of them to gain a living by other occupations, on condition of their paying him a fixed yearly sum (*obrók*) as a substitute for the field labour which he did not require. For such proprietors the emancipation of the serfs without compensation would of course have been ruinous. To prevent this it was decided that all the peasants — even those who lived by non-agricultural occupations — should be obliged to accept land, and to pay for it dues exceeding the normal rent.

Thus, we see, in the Northern Agricultural Zone the proprietors received a certain compensation for the loss of serf labour in the annual dues imposed on the peasantry by the Emancipation Law. It must be added, however, that this compensation was not nearly so great as it seemed. The proprietor found it always difficult, and often utterly impossible, to

collect the dues; and he had reason to fear that the peasants, in accordance with the permission granted to them by the Law, would, at the expiry of the first nine years, entirely liberate themselves from these dues by emigrating to the towns or to more fertile parts of the country. The only way he had of escaping from these difficulties and dangers lay in demanding the so-called obligatory redemption of the land (*obiazátelny vuikup*), and in adopting this expedient he had to make considerable sacrifices. In the first place, as he demanded the redemption of the land without obtaining the consent of the peasants, he had to accept four-fifths of the sum as full payment; and in the second place, a large part of the four-fifths was paid to him, not in money, but in Government five per cent. bonds, which rapidly fell — on account of the enormous number of them which were simultaneously thrown on the market — to eighty per cent. of their nominal value. Thus, instead of receiving 150 roubles from each of his male peasants, he received only 130 roubles nominally, and considerably less in reality, unless he could wait for fifteen years — the term fixed for the replacing of the Government bonds by bank-notes. And even of this diminished sum many proprietors actually received only a small portion, for the Treasury paid to itself all claims which it had on the estates, and handed over merely the balance.

Let us now pass to the second part of the problem: What have the proprietors done with the part of their estates which remained to them after ceding

the required amount of land to the Communes? Have they been indirectly indemnified for the loss of serf labour by the economic changes which have taken place since the Emancipation? How far have they succeeded in making the transition from serfage to free labour, and what revenues do they now derive from their estates? The answer to these questions will necessarily contain some account of the present economic position of the proprietors.

On all proprietors the Emancipation had at least one good effect: it dragged them forcibly from the old path of indolence and routine, and compelled them to think and calculate regarding their affairs. The hereditary listlessness and apathy, the traditional habit of looking on the estate with its serfs as a kind of self-acting machine which must always spontaneously supply the owner with the means of living, the inveterate practice of spending all ready money, and of taking little heed for the morrow — all this, with much that resulted from it, was rudely swept away and became a thing of the past. The broad, easy road on which the proprietors had hitherto let themselves be borne along by the force of circumstances suddenly split up into a number of narrow, arduous, thorny paths. Each one had now to use his judgment to determine which of the paths he should adopt, and, having made his choice, he had to struggle along as he best could. I remember once asking a proprietor what effect the Emancipation had had on the class to which he belonged, and he gave me an answer which is worth recording.

"Formerly," he said, "we kept no accounts and drank champagne; now we keep accounts and content ourselves with beer." Like all epigrammatic sayings, this laconic reply is far from giving a complete description of reality, but it indicates in a graphic way a change that has unquestionably taken place. As soon as serfage was abolished it was no longer possible to live like "the flowers of the field." Many a proprietor who had formerly vegetated in apathetic ease had to ask himself the question: How am I now to gain a living? All had to consider what was the most profitable way of employing the land that remained to them. Some change had to be made, and one such change inevitably brings others in its train. When the boulder which has stood immovable for ages on the hill-side has once been disimbedded and begins to roll downwards, it acquires force as it proceeds, and advances with ever-increasing rapidity.

"What am I to do with the land that remains in my possession?" This was the question which each proprietor had to put to himself.

For those who did not live on their estates, or who did not wish to farm on their own account, the simplest way of solving the difficulty was to let the land to the peasants for a fixed yearly sum. This system had the advantage of removing all trouble and risk, but it had one serious disadvantage: when the peasants rent land they invariably practise what the Germans aptly call "Raubwirthschaft" — that is to say, they cultivate badly and exhaust the land

by recklessly extracting from it as much as possible. In spite, therefore, of immediate advantages, the system is in the long run disadvantageous to the landowners; for in Russia there is no class of men corresponding to the farmers in England, who rent farms and work them without exhausting the soil.

For those who wished to farm on their own account, four different systems were possible:

1. Those who had hitherto farmed by serf labour might, if the peasants consented to the arrangement, continue the old system under certain restrictions. Instead of paying dues for the Communal land, the Commune supplied, according to this system, a definite amount of field labour, carefully defined in the Emancipation Law.

2. The second solution was to make an agreement with the Commune, or with individual peasants, according to which a certain definite amount of agricultural work should be executed for a certain fixed sum or for a certain amount of pasturage or firewood. When this system is adopted, the peasants always use their own horses and agricultural implements, and the calculation is made per *dessyatine*, or, as we should say, *per acre*.

3. The third solution was the system commonly known as *métayage* — that is to say, a kind of temporary partnership or joint venture, in which the proprietor supplies the land and the seed, and the peasants do all the work with their own horses and implements, the harvest being divided between the

contracting parties either equally or in some other proportion previously agreed upon.

4. The fourth solution consisted in hiring agricultural labourers and organising farms on the model of those in Western Europe. In this way the proprietor broke off all relations with his former serfs.

The more enlightened proprietors clearly perceived that of all these solutions the last-named alone afforded the possibility of making radical ameliorations in the existing system of agriculture, but they at the same time recognised that of all the solutions it was the most difficult to adopt. A large sum of money would have to be expended at once on permanent improvements, and a considerable amount of capital would be required for current expenses. It has been calculated that in England, even when no change of system is contemplated, a tenant who rents a farm of 500 acres ought to expend during the first year and a half about £3,000.[1] This will give some vague idea of the expenses of scientific farming in the most favourable conditions. In a country like Russia the expenses would be, of course, much greater. And where could the Russian farmers at the time of the Emancipation find such a large amount of capital? The great majority of them had more debts than ready money. The old institutions for lending money on landed security had been closed, and the new land-credit associations had not yet been formed. To borrow from private capitalists

[1] Stephens, "The Book of the Farm" (Edinburgh and London, 1871), II., p. 443.

was ruinous, for money was at that time so scarce that ten per cent. was considered a "friendly" rate of interest. The redemption operation, it is true, might be effected, but this did not by any means always supply a sufficient amount; for the Government subtracted the mortgages which lay on the estates, and paid the greater part of the balance in paper that was considerably depreciated. At the same time there were other, and scarcely less serious, obstacles in the way. The proprietors in general possessed little technical knowledge, and had never had any practical experience in scientific farming. A few had scientific knowledge, and a great many had practical acquaintance with agricultural matters, but the scientific knowledge and the practical experience were rarely found united in one person. Even the few who possessed the requisite capital, knowledge, and experience found the task extremely difficult; for it was impossible at first to find trained agricultural labourers — very often impossible to find the requisite number of labourers of any kind.

Under these circumstances the great mass of the proprietors could not for a moment think seriously of attempting to solve the difficulty in this radical way. Many of them at first did not even attempt the second or third of the solutions above enumerated, but contented themselves with continuing the old system under the restrictions imposed by the Emancipation Law. The practical disadvantages of this system, however, very soon became apparent. If it had been difficult to farm profitably by this method,

even when the proprietor had unlimited power over his peasants, it was, of course, infinitely more difficult when he was hampered by endless legislative restrictions, and possessed no direct means of ensuring even the fulfilment of his legal rights. When the peasants refused to do as they were ordered — and this occurred very frequently, so long as they had no clear conception of their new rights and obligations — the only remedy lay in complaining to the Arbiter of the Peace; and a complaint of this kind, however well founded it might be, could not be satisfied without much annoyance and serious loss of time. At hay-making and harvest-time a single day's delay might cause very serious loss, and those were precisely the times when the labourers were most likely to absent themselves. They had their own hay or grain to attend to, and knew very well that they would not be very severely punished for not fulfilling their obligations to their former master. In this way the proprietors were soon compelled, by the force of circumstances, to adopt one of the other possible solutions; and the peasants, who likewise found the legal regulations extremely burdensome, willingly consented to the change.

The transition to one of these other solutions was in all cases difficult, but the difficulties were not in all parts of the country equally great. Throughout the whole of the Black-Earth Zone the soil still possessed enough of its natural fertility to make farming profitable, even when practised according to the old primitive methods, and consequently the proprietors

could make gradually, and according to their own convenience, any ameliorations which they considered necessary. If the proprietor did not wish to farm at all, the neighbouring peasantry were always ready to take his land at a fair rent. In the Northern Agricultural Zone, on the contrary, the soil was too much exhausted to repay primitive farming, and the agriculture of the proprietors had been long artificially kept alive by means of serfage. Here, therefore, the proprietors could not continue to farm without making at once radical and permanent improvements on their estates; and from letting the land to the peasantry they could receive but a very small revenue.

This important difference between the two agricultural zones is reflected in the present condition of the landed proprietors and of their estates. In the Northern Zone the proprietors have nearly all given up farming, and let as much of their land as possible to the neighbouring peasantry. The houses in which they formerly lived — many of them as *grands seigneurs* — are for the most part deserted and left exposed to the ravages of time, while the owners live in the towns, earning a livelihood in the public service, or in those numerous commercial and industrial undertakings which have sprung up in recent years with such marvellous rapidity. If a moralist were to make a sentimental journey through this part of the country, he would find abundant materials for edifying reflections on the instability of earthly greatness, and the folly of living carelessly from day to day without taking thought for the

morrow. In the Southern Zone, on the contrary, the estates now present more activity than formerly. Nearly all the proprietors cultivate at least a part of their property, and can easily let to the neighbouring peasantry the land which they do not wish to farm on their own account. Some have adopted the system of *métayage*, others get the field-work done by the peasants at so much per acre, and a considerable number have succeeded in organising farms with hired labourers on the West-European model. In some of the densely-populated districts the proprietors are in the habit of letting the whole of their land, and derive from this a large revenue. The Russian peasant likes the risk and chances of farming on his own account, and is ready to pay a high rent for land rather than work as a labourer.

Nearly all the estates on which hired labourers and an improved system of agriculture have been introduced are to be found in the northern part of the Black-Earth Zone. Here the land is fertile, labour comparatively abundant, the climate moderate, and markets for the sale of produce are near at hand. To show that it is quite possible for a proprietor of this locality to make very important improvements, and to obtain thereby a very considerable increase of revenue, I venture to give here a few details regarding a large estate belonging to Prince Victor Wassiltchikof, a gentleman whose name is well known to all who take an interest in the progress of agriculture in Russia. Before the Emancipation the annual net revenue had varied from 4,613 roubles to 21,659

roubles, and a ten years' average gave the sum of 14,350 roubles. After the Emancipation, when rather more than half of the land had been ceded to the peasants, the remainder gave an average revenue of 28,996 roubles — that is to say, more than twice as much as the whole estate had given during the time of serfage. If we add to this the sum annually received for the land ceded to the peasants (7,715 roubles), we find that the annual net revenue derived from the estate amounted to 36,711 roubles — that is to say, two and a half times as much as was obtained before the Emancipation. Did I not fear to fatigue the reader with details, I might describe several analogous cases in which the system of agriculture has been greatly improved and the revenues considerably increased. But we must not from such examples draw any hasty general conclusion, for they illustrate not the rule but the exception. On all the estates which I have in view preparations had been made for the transition from serfage to free labour long before the Emancipation, and the owners were all men of remarkable ability, energy, and perseverance, in addition to which some of them possessed great practical knowledge. Such men were, unfortunately, few in number. The former life of the nobles had been little favourable to the acquiring of special knowledge or the formation of those habits which tend to make a successful farmer.

As to the proprietors of the ordinary type in this region, I think it may be said that in general their revenues, though they certainly did not increase to

such an extent as in the instance above cited, were not seriously diminished by the Emancipation. In all cases, at least, in which I have succeeded in obtaining trustworthy data, I have found an increase rather than a diminution of revenue. Thus, for instance, in the province of Riazán I found a large estate in which all the items of income and expenditure had been noted down carefully in chronological order for a long series of years. By reducing the bulky and confused materials to order I obtained the following result: During the eight years immediately preceding the Emancipation, the net average revenue amounted to 8,445 roubles; during the four years immediately following the Emancipation it fell to 5,186; and during the next four years it rose to 13,190. The temporary decrease of the revenue during the years immediately following the Emancipation was produced by the temporary disorder to which the reform gave rise.[1] This case I regard as very typical, because no change was made in the system of culture or in the administration of the estate. The serf who had for many years acted as steward continued to exercise his functions as before, and displayed a very decided repugnance to all kinds of innovations.

[1] This temporary decrease of revenue took place even on the estates of able, energetic proprietors who had foreseen the Emancipation, and had made preparations for it. Thus, in the balance-sheet of one who unquestionably belongs to this class, I find the following statement:

1857–61	Average	net	revenue	47,433	roubles.
1862–66	"	"	"	25,918	"
1867–71	"	"	"	77,369	"

On the whole I am inclined to believe that, as a rule, the proprietors of this region receive larger revenues now than they did before the Emancipation; but I am not prepared to say that their material condition has been improved. The cost of living has greatly increased — especially for those who have always lived on their estates — and the work of administration is incomparably more complicated and laborious.

In the southern section of this zone the position of the proprietors was, and is still, somewhat different. The rural population is much less dense, and is composed chiefly of State peasants and foreign colonists, who have plenty of land of their own, and have no reason to become tenants or hired labourers. The large estates generally possessed nothing that could, even with a very wide poetical licence, be termed a mansion-house, and were, at the time of the Emancipation, chiefly used for two purposes: either they were used as sheep-farms for the production of merino wool, or they were let to agricultural speculators (*posêvtchiki*) — a class of men analogous to the *mercanti di campagna* in some parts of Italy — who raised with the least possible expenditure of labour three or four crops, and then allowed the land to lie fallow for eight or ten years. The smallness of the revenue derived by the proprietors from this method of cultivating the land may be best illustrated by the following fact: When travelling in 1872 in an outlying district, where the system of speculative wheat-raising is still practised, I found that vast

tracts of Crown lands, by far the greater part of which had a rich fertile soil, were let at about threepence per acre (25 *kopéks* per *dessyatine*).[1]

During the last few years this state of things has been considerably modified, but the change must be attributed only in part and indirectly to the Emancipation. Fine wools have greatly fallen in price, and sheep-farming has consequently become less remunerative. At the same time the extension of railways and the development of the export trade from the coasts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azof have rendered the cultivation of wheat and linseed much more profitable than formerly. Thus sheep-farming and the primitive method of raising wheat practised by the *mercanti di campagna* have been to a great extent replaced by regular agriculture, and the direct consequence of this change has been a considerable rise in the value of land. This rise has not been so great as in some districts of the northern section of the Black-Earth Zone, but it has been sufficient, I believe, to indemnify the proprietors for the losses which they sustained by the Emancipation. It must be confessed, however, that the proprietors of this region who attempt regular farming have still formidable difficulties to contend with, the chief of which are the frequent droughts and the scarcity of labour.

[1] The district in question is in the south-east part of the province of Samára. I was informed on good authority that one of the speculators of this locality sometimes sows as much as 6,000 *dessyatines* — that is, more than 16,000 acres — of wheat, but I have some difficulty in believing the statement.

The former of these difficulties is commonly believed to be entirely beyond the reach of the husbandman. The aridity of the climate, it is said, is caused by the absence of forests, and can be remedied only by an extensive system of arboriculture; and the Government has, as I have already mentioned, seriously entertained various projects based on this theory. How far the planting of a few hundred or a few thousand acres of artificial forest at a very great expense could perceptibly modify the climate of a country comprising many thousand square miles, I must leave specialists to determine. I may remark, however, that there is a less grandiose and more effective remedy much nearer at hand. It consists simply in deeper ploughing and in improving generally the method of cultivation. Menonite colonists have repeatedly informed me that they suffer from the frequent droughts much less than the peasants around them, and I cannot explain this otherwise than by the fact that the land is better cultivated by the Menonites than by their neighbours.

The second difficulty is, in a certain sense, more serious than the aridity of the climate. The droughts come only occasionally, whilst the scarcity of labourers is a constant source of trouble. As the difficulty of obtaining good labourers is commonly believed to be the chief obstacle to agricultural progress in all parts of the country, it may be well to make a few general remarks before describing the peculiar difficulties with which the farmers of this region have to contend.

The complaints of the proprietors on this subject all over the country form at present an almost harmonious chorus. The peasants, it is said, since the Emancipation have become lazy, careless, addicted to drunkenness, and shamelessly dishonest with regard to their obligations, so that it is difficult to farm even in the old primitive fashion, and positively impossible to introduce improvements in the methods of culture. And it must be confessed that these and similar accusations are not entirely devoid of foundation. That the Russian peasant generally exerts himself as little as possible, that he pays less attention to the quality than to the quantity of the work, that he often shows a reckless carelessness with regard to his employer's property, that he sometimes takes money in advance and does not conscientiously fulfil his contract, that the majority of the peasants occasionally get drunk, and many of them are ready to commit certain kinds of theft when they have a favourable opportunity — all this is undoubtedly true, whatever biassed theorists and sentimental peasant-admirers may say to the contrary.[1] And, indeed, it would be strange were it otherwise, for such phenomena are to be found more or less frequently in every country in the world, and

[1] Amongst themselves Russian peasants are, as a rule, not addicted to thieving, as is proved by the fact that they often leave their doors unlocked when all the inmates of the houses are in the fields; but if the *muzhík* finds in the proprietor's farmyard a piece of iron, or a bit of rope, or any of those things which he constantly requires and has great difficulty in obtaining, he is very apt to pick it up and carry it home. His notions of property with regard to such articles are very similar to those of servants in many other countries with regard to eatables.

must be especially frequent in a country where the intellectual and moral education of the people has been utterly neglected and serfage has been only recently abolished. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the fault is entirely on the side of the peasants, or that these facts form an insurmountable obstacle to the introduction of a rational system of agriculture based on free labour; and it would be not less erroneous to imagine, with the majority of the proprietors, that these difficulties might be greatly diminished, or entirely removed, by greater severity on the part of judges, or by an improved system of passports.

Farming with free labour, like every other department of human activity, requires a certain quantity of knowledge, judgment, prudence, and tact, which no amount of ingenious legislation or judicial severity can successfully replace. In engaging servants in other countries as well as in Russia, it is necessary to make a careful selection, and to put them in such a position that they should value their place and fear to lose it; and when all this has been done, the watchful eye and directing hand of the master should be always present. In a word, servants must be treated, not as machines, but as human beings who are always more inclined to act according to their immediate personal interest than according to the dictates of high morality. This simple truth appears to be very imperfectly understood by the majority of Russian proprietors. They seem to imagine that they have merely to make contracts and give orders, and that

they may leave the rest to the intelligence and disinterested integrity of the labourers. From false views of economy they often choose the cheapest labourer, without examining his other qualifications, or they take advantage of the peasant's pecuniary embarrassments, and make contracts with him which he cannot by any possibility fulfil. In spring, for instance, when the peasant has nothing to eat and no money to pay his taxes, they advance him a small quantity of rye-meal or a small sum of money, and demand in return an amount of summer work out of all proportion to the value of the meal or money advanced. The peasant is fully conscious in such cases that the contract is for him very disadvantageous, but what is he to do? He must have food for himself and his family, and the rural authorities are threatening to flog him or sell his cow if he does not pay his arrears. In desperation he accepts the conditions, receives the advance, and so puts off the evil day — consoling himself with the reflection that perhaps (*avos'*) "something may turn up." When the time comes for the fulfilling of the contract his difficulties reappear in a worse form than before. According to the contract he ought to work nearly the whole summer for the proprietor, and meanwhile he has no food for himself and his family, and no provision for the coming winter. In such a position it is surely not strange that he should seek to evade the contract by every possible means. The proprietor, on the other hand, finds his plans thereby deranged, and raises the cry for more stringent

legislation or some ingenious administrative contrivance that will compel the peasants to fulfil their obligations. It is difficult, however, to imagine any legislative or administrative contrivance, short of the old system of serfage, which could in practice compel the fulfilment of such contracts.

In speaking thus I have no intention of exculpating the peasants who act in the manner above described, and am quite ready to admit that their difficult position is very often the result of their own improvidence. All I mean to assert is, that proprietors who make such contracts and are afterwards disappointed are themselves to blame. They ought to pay for a fair day's work a fair day's wages, and to make only such contracts as are likely in the existing conditions to be voluntarily fulfilled. To make imprudent contracts and trust to the omnipotence of the law for their fulfilment is a policy which in all parts of the world is likely to lead to bankruptcy. Even in England, which is often cited by proprietors of this type as a happy land in which the law is respected and breaches of contract rigorously punished, any farmer who should be mad enough to adopt the principle of paying for field labour two or three years in advance — as I have known some Russian proprietors do — would very soon be compelled to give up farming, and to choose some other vocation more suited to his unpractical mind.

That the fault does not lie entirely on the side of the peasants is not a conclusion derived merely from *à priori* reasoning, but a truth fully proved by ex-

perience. In all parts of the country I have found that the above complaints are rarely, if ever, made by active, energetic, intelligent agriculturists who live on their estates all the year round: the complainers are chiefly men who seem to imagine that the management of an estate may be left to subordinates, and that farming is an occupation resembling those comfortable places in the public service of which the occupant requires to appear merely on ceremonial occasions. Of the numerous direct testimonies which I might quote on this subject, I restrict myself to that of Prince Wassiltchikof, of whom I have already spoken. He expressly declares that during the space of eight years he had never serious cause for dissatisfaction with the labourers he employed, and that he never once had recourse to the authorities.

As a great deal is said and written about the "incorrigible laziness" of the Russian peasantry, I may make here a few remarks on the subject. The *muzhík* is certainly very slow in his movements — slower even than the English rustic — but the proprietors have little right to reproach him with his indolence. To them he might reply with a very strong argument of the *tu quoque* kind, and to all the other classes the argument might likewise be addressed. The St. Petersburg official, for example, who writes philippics about peasant laziness, considers that for himself attendance at his office for three or four hours — a large part of which is devoted to the unproductive labour of smoking cigarettes — is a very fair day's work. The truth is

that in Russia the struggle for life is not nearly so intense as in countries more densely populated, and society is so constituted that all can live without very strenuous exertion. The Russians seem, therefore, to the traveller who comes from the West, an indolent, apathetic race. But here, as elsewhere, everything depends on the standard of comparison. If the traveller comes from the East — especially if he has been living for some time among pastoral races — the Russians will appear to him a most energetic and laborious people. Their character in this respect corresponds to their geographical position: they stand midway between the laborious, painstaking, industrial population of Western Europe and the indolent, undisciplined, spasmodically-energetic pastoral tribes of the Steppe. They are capable of effecting much by vigorous, intermittent effort — witness the peasant at harvest-time, or the St. Petersburg official when some big legislative project has to be presented to the Emperor within a given time — but they have not yet learned regular laborious habits. They might move the world if it could be done by a jerk, but they are still deficient in that calm perseverance and dogged tenacity which characterise the Teutonic race.

To return from this digression, it must be admitted that in the southern section of the Black-Earth Zone the proprietors have peculiar difficulties to contend with. The country, as we have seen, is thinly peopled, and the deficiency in agricultural labourers is

only partially supplied by the annual summer migrations from the north. For the preparation of the land and the sowing of the grain the ordinary population suffices; but for the harvest the services of the nomadic reapers are always required, and when the harvest is plentiful the price of labour rises to such an extent that the proprietor has sometimes reason to regret the exceptional bounty of Nature. I know at least of one case where an unusually abundant harvest ruined many farmers. This happened in the province of Samára in the year 1868. The harvest was so abundant that the reaping cost about twenty-five shillings per acre, and the grain was afterwards spoiled by continuous rains, so that the reaping expenses became a dead loss. Even when no casualty happens the reaping expenses often eat up nearly all the profits. To insure themselves against these fluctuations in the price of labour, many proprietors send agents to the north in early spring to hire reapers at a moderate price for the harvest-time. These agents have no difficulty in hiring peasants at the fairs, or in making contracts with the rural authorities for the services of the peasants who are in arrear with the payment of their taxes; but their efforts have often in the long run little practical result. The labourers hired do not appear at the time stipulated, or they work merely for a few days, and decamp in a body as soon as they hear that high prices are being given by a neighbouring proprietor or in some other district. Recourse to the authorities is well-nigh

useless, for before any steps can be taken for compelling the peasants to fulfil their contracts the harvest-time is past, and there is of course no possibility of obtaining damages from the defaulters. Those who look to the Government for the cure of all evils think that this might be remedied by the introduction of a more complicated system of passports; but the active, intelligent proprietors seek a more rational and more effectual cure. And these latter, it seems, are on the way to solving the problem. By sowing partly late and partly early wheat, and by the introduction of reaping-machines, they have already made themselves much less dependent on the nomadic reapers. Meanwhile the population is rapidly increasing, so that in all probability before many years the difficulty of obtaining labourers will spontaneously disappear.

Perhaps I may be allowed now, in conclusion, to express a general opinion regarding the economic results of the Emancipation so far as the proprietors are concerned.

The proprietors of the Northern Agricultural Zone incurred serious loss by the abolition of serfage, and have nearly all abandoned agriculture as an unprofitable occupation. A few of them are now beginning anew on a more rational system. Instead of cultivating as much as possible without taking into consideration the labour expended, they restrict themselves to a comparatively small area, and endeavour to cultivate it well. Some declare that they find the result satisfactory, but I believe the profits

are too small to induce many proprietors to make the attempt, and it seems to me much more probable that the arable land in this part of the country will gradually pass into the hands of the peasantry, who can often extract a fair revenue from it when the proprietor can only farm it at a loss. Already the process has begun, and it would doubtless go on much more quickly if the purchase of small lots could be effected with fewer formalities and less expense.

The proprietors of the two southern regions, on the contrary, have suffered, I believe, no pecuniary loss by the Emancipation, if the economic changes which have occurred since that event be taken into consideration. Many of them, certainly, receive now much larger revenues than they received in the time of serfage. Those of them who have succeeded in making the requisite alterations find that farming with free labour gives a fair return for the capital expended, whilst those who do not attempt farming derive a considerable revenue by letting their land to the peasants.

And yet it must be confessed that even in these southern regions many proprietors can say with a certain amount of truth that the Emancipation ruined them. Formerly they lived on their estates in comfort and plenty, or lived in the towns and drew a large revenue from their estates, and now all their landed property has been sold by auction to satisfy the demands of importunate creditors. These facts seem at first to give the lie to what has just been

said, but in reality there is here no contradiction. I have never asserted, and had no intention of implying, that the Emancipation saved the foolish proprietors from the consequences of their own folly. In all my remarks I have assumed that the proprietors were solvent at the time of the Emancipation, and that they acted afterwards with a reasonable amount of intelligence and circumspection. The proprietors who did not fulfil these conditions I have hitherto left out of account, and I may now dismiss them with a very few words. So long as serfage with all its extremely elastic relations existed, many proprietors lived constantly in an atmosphere of debt, but contrived to keep their heads above water, like merchants who are thoroughly insolvent and prolong their commercial existence by means of accommodation bills and similar desperate expedients. For these men the Emancipation, like a crisis in the commercial world, brought a day of reckoning. It did not really ruin them, but it showed them that they were ruined. Very similar is the present position of those men who were accidentally solvent at the time of the Emancipation, but have since lived recklessly beyond their incomes. These, too, have some reason to complain of the change which has been effected; for in the elastic relations which serfage created they might have lived respected and died regretted without having made the acquaintance of the Bankruptcy Court.

This leads us naturally to the moral influence of the Emancipation, but into this wide and difficult

subject I cannot here enter. I do not wish to trouble the reader with *à priori* reasonings and commonplace general reflections, and I am obliged to confess that my own observations have not supplied me with sufficient materials for accurately determining this influence. It is still, I believe, too soon to treat the subject from the moral point of view. One beneficial moral effect is, however, sufficiently apparent: the Emancipation compelled the proprietors to "put their house in order," under pain of summary ejection. By breaking down numerous barriers which protected them against the natural consequences of improvidence and folly, it has forced them to pay more attention to those simple elementary principles which form the basis of all well-regulated civilised society.

CHAPTER XIII

CONSEQUENCES OF THE EMANCIPATION

B. — FOR THE PEASANTRY

AT the commencement of last chapter I pointed out in general terms the difficulty of describing clearly the immediate consequences of the Emancipation. In beginning now to speak of the influence which the great reform has had on the peasantry, I feel that the difficulty has reached its climax. The foreigner who desires merely to gain a general idea of the subject cannot be expected to take an interest in details, and even if he took the trouble to examine them attentively, he would derive from the labour little real information. The rural life, and in general the economic organisation, of Russia is so peculiar, so very different from those of Western Europe, that even the fullest data regarding the quantity of land enjoyed by the peasantry, the amount of dues paid for it, the productivity of the soil, the price of grain, and similar topics, would convey to an Englishman's mind no clear conception of the peasants' actual condition. And, indeed, ordinary readers have no desire to study statistical data or details of any kind. What they wish is a

clear, concise, and dogmatic statement of general results. Has the material and moral condition of the peasantry improved since the Emancipation? That is the simple question which they have to put, and they naturally expect a simple, categorical answer.

It may be naturally supposed that any one who has lived for several years in Russia, and has devoted a great part of his time to the study of the agrarian relations before and after the Emancipation — who has had abundant opportunities of consulting official statistics and of questioning proprietors and peasants in various parts of the country — must necessarily be ready to answer this question in an authoritative tone. And yet, whilst recognising that the supposition is natural and to some extent justifiable, I am obliged to make the humiliating confession that, though I have fulfilled all the conditions enumerated, I am not prepared to pronounce any very decided opinion on the subject. Nay, more, I venture to assert that any one who studies the subject carefully, in an unbiassed spirit, and draws his conclusions, not from *à priori* reasoning, but from experience, will probably find himself in the same position. That the legal position of the peasantry has been enormously improved, and their opportunities for making material and moral progress immensely increased, there can be no possible doubt. But when the investigator endeavours to go a step further, and seeks to determine how far this new legal position has been taken advantage

of, and how far these new opportunities have been used to good purpose, he at once feels that he no longer stands on firm ground. Here and there he finds a village or a small district in which the inhabitants have unquestionably made considerable progress; but on the other hand he finds hundreds of villages and districts in which good and evil consequences are so mixed up together that it is impossible to draw any conclusion.

To decide the question in a scientific way it would be necessary to have complete and accurate statistical data regarding the economic condition of the peasantry before and after the Emancipation. Unfortunately the statistical material which actually exists is in general inaccurate and fragmentary, and that section of it which relates to the time of serfage is for our present purpose almost worthless. We are thus reduced to the necessity of accepting vague opinions founded on general impressions, or, in other words, the testimony of those who have had good opportunities of observation. This category of authorities is very numerous, for it includes all proprietors of a certain age who have habitually lived on their estates; but the testimony given by these witnesses has in my opinion less value than is commonly attributed to it. To explain this I must make here a little digression.

The great majority of educated Russians are at present suffering from the effect of shattered illusions. During the time of the Emancipation they indulged in most immoderate expectations. They

believed, with an ardour of which only neophytes are capable, that Russia had discovered a new path of progress, by which she would escape the action of those harsh economic laws which weigh so heavily on the working classes of Western Europe, and that she had thereby for ever guaranteed herself against the numerous social evils under which Western Europe is labouring. In securing for the peasants the land they actually enjoyed, and in developing the Communal institutions in the direction of self-government, she laid, it was thought, a firm basis for her future prosperity. Grave doubts might be entertained as to the future fate of the landed proprietors, but there could be none, it was imagined, as to the future of the peasants. They would at once "change from head to foot." Their new position would "loosen their tongue, and break the enchanted circle of their conceptions."[1] As soon as they felt themselves to be free, they would strive to better their condition. Agriculture would be improved, waste lands would be reclaimed, the number of cattle would be increased, the old vices that had been created and fostered by serfage would disappear, and the new rural institutions would develop a healthy local public life. In a word, it was expected that the Emancipation would produce instantaneously a complete transformation in the life and character of the rural population, and that the peasant

[1] These expressions are taken from an unpublished letter written immediately after the Emancipation, by a proprietor who imagined that he already perceived the change.

would become at once a sober, industrious, model agriculturist.

These expectations were not realised. One year passed, five years passed, ten years passed, and the expected transformation did not take place. On the contrary, there appeared certain very ugly phenomena which were not at all in the programme. The peasants, it is said, began to drink more and to work less, and the public life which the Communal institutions produced was by no means of a desirable kind. The "bawlers" (*gorlopány*) acquired a prejudicial influence in the Village Assemblies, and in very many Volosts the peasant judges, elected by their fellow-villagers, acquired a bad habit of selling their decisions for *vódka*. The natural consequence of all this was that those who had indulged in exaggerated expectations sank into a state of inordinate despondency, and imagined that things were much worse than they really were. This despondency still continues at the present day, and tinges strongly the commonly-received opinions regarding the present condition of the peasantry.

For different reasons, those who did not indulge in exaggerated expectations, and did not sympathise with the Emancipation in the form in which it was effected, are equally inclined to take a pessimistic view of the situation. In every ugly phenomenon they find a confirmation of their opinions. They foresaw it all, predicted it all, explained to all who would listen to them the folly of conferring on the serfs Communal lands and Communal self-govern-

ment. But the Government paid no attention to their warnings, and preferred listening to the seductive suggestions of socialistic dreamers. And the result has been precisely what they foretold. The peasants have used their liberty and their privileges to their own detriment and to the detriment of others! Such invectives are often heard at the present time, and they are, of course, very much intensified when the speaker has struggled unsuccessfully with the difficulties of farming with free labour, and has suffered from the negligence or bad faith of the peasants whom he employed.

The extreme "Liberals" are also inclined, for reasons of their own, to join in the doleful chorus. They desire that the condition of the peasantry should be further improved by legislative enactments, and accordingly they paint the evils in as dark colours as possible.

Thus, we see, the majority of the educated classes are at present unduly disposed to represent to themselves and to others the actual condition of the peasantry in a very unfavourable light. This is why I believe that the commonly-received opinions on the subject have less value than is commonly attributed to them.

Why then, it may be said, has the question not been submitted to the peasants themselves? Surely they are after all the best judges. They must certainly know whether their condition is better now than before the Emancipation. By questioning a large number of them in various parts of the coun-

try and combining the fragmentary evidence thus collected, we might easily, it would seem, arrive at a clear and well-founded conclusion.

Such was, I confess, my own opinion at the beginning of my investigations; but when I endeavoured to put this method into practice I very soon perceived that it was by no means so effectual as I had imagined. In the first place it is extremely difficult to discover what the peasants' opinion really is. With all their kindly good-nature and apparent simplicity, the Russian peasantry have a large dose of homely prudence, which easily takes the form of suspicion, and when their suspicions are aroused they have a very meagre veneration for truth. As they have no conception of disinterested scientific curiosity, they are extremely apt to suspect that a stranger who questions them regarding matters which do not personally concern him has some secret, sinister object in view. It is not difficult to perceive on such occasions that they put themselves at once upon their guard, and intentionally make their answers as vague as possible, in order that their supposed opponent may not overreach them. Even when the traveller does not arouse, or succeeds in allaying, their suspicions, he cannot trust implicitly to their testimony, for they frequently, from a feeling of complacency, give him the answers which they suppose him to desire. This I have frequently proved by putting leading questions and obtaining from one and the same individual the most contradictory replies.

But it is not always on account of suspicion or complacency that the peasant's replies are vague and unsatisfactory. The chief cause of the vagueness lies, I believe, in the fact that he has generally no clear definite answer to give. Uneducated people rarely make generalisations which have no practical utility, and I feel sure that very few Russian peasants ever put to themselves the question: Am I better off now than I was in the time of serfage? When such a question is put to them they feel taken aback. And in truth it is no easy matter to sum up the two sides of the account and draw an accurate balance, except in those exceptional cases in which the proprietor flagrantly abused his authority. The present money-dues and taxes are often more burdensome than the labour-dues in the time of serfage. If the serfs had a great many ill-defined obligations to fulfil — such as the carting of the master's grain to market, the preparing of his firewood, the supplying him with eggs, chickens, home-made linen, and the like — they had, on the other hand, a good many ill-defined privileges. They grazed their cattle during a part of the year on the manor-land; they received firewood and occasionally logs for repairing their huts: sometimes the proprietor lent them or gave them a cow or a horse when they had been visited by the cattle-plague or the horse-stealer; and in times of famine they could look to their master for support. All this has now come to an end. Their burdens and their privileges have been swept away together, and been replaced by clearly-defined, unbending,

unelastic legal relations. They have now to pay the market-price for every stick of firewood which they burn, for every log which they require for repairing their houses, and for every rood of land on which to graze their cattle. Nothing is now to be had gratis. The demand to pay is encountered at every step. If a cow dies or a horse is stolen, the owner can no longer go to the proprietor with the hope of receiving a present, or at least a loan without interest, but must, if he has no ready money, apply to the village usurer, who probably considers twenty or thirty per cent. as a by no means exorbitant rate of interest. Sometimes it even happens that the peasant has to pay without getting any return whatever, as, for instance, when his cattle stray into the proprietor's fields — an accident that may easily occur in a country where walls and hedges are almost unknown. Formerly, on such an occasion, he escaped with a scolding or with a light castigation, which was soon forgotten; but now he has to pay as a fine a sum which is for him considerable. Thinking of all this and of the other advantages and disadvantages of his new position, he has naturally much difficulty in coming to a general conclusion, and is perhaps quite sincere when, on being asked whether his new position is better than the old, he scratches the back of his head and replies, in a mystified, doubtful tone, "How shall I say to you? It is both better and worse!" ("*Kak vam shazát'? I lûtche i khûdzhe!*")

Must we then at once dismiss the problem as

insoluble, and turn to some other subject? Certainly not. The fact that the question is so difficult to answer is in itself important, and may be taken as a proof that little or no amelioration has taken place in the condition of the peasantry. If any great, decided amelioration had taken place it would certainly have been perceived and proclaimed to the world, and we should not have found, as we find at present, that the men who are most capable of judging are precisely those who refrain most carefully from expressing a decided opinion on the subject. Evidently the peasantry have not made the progress that was expected. If they have improved their condition at all, the improvement is so insignificant as to be scarcely perceptible. It may be well, then, to consider what is the cause of this stagnation. Why has the abolition of serfage not yet had those beneficent consequences which even moderate men so confidently predicted?

On this subject there is a great diversity of opinion. Some explain the phenomenon by the demoralisation of the peasantry, others by the defects of the Communal institutions, and a third group by the peculiar economic position in which the peasant is at present placed. And each of these groups has a special panacea to propose. The first proposes moral education; the second recommends the abolition of Communal property, and important modifications in the existing system of peasant self-government; the third considers that the most necessary measures are a considerable diminution of the taxes and land-

dues, a radical financial reform, and an extensive system of emigration.

It seems to me that these three groups err less in what they assert than in what they deny or overlook, and that we have here a case in which the fundamental principle of the eclectic philosophy may be fitly applied. The phenomenon is in my opinion the result, not of one but of various causes, and consequently the evil cannot be cured by the application of a single remedy. The grounds upon which this opinion is based I proceed briefly to indicate.

That the peasantry greatly injure their material welfare by drunkenness and improvidence there can be no reasonable doubt. The comparatively flourishing state of certain villages of Old Ritualists and Molokáns, in which there is no drunkenness, and in which the community exercises a strong moral control over the individual members, shows plainly that a more satisfactory moral condition would of itself ensure a more satisfactory material condition among the peasants generally. If the Orthodox Church could make the peasantry refrain from the inordinate use of strong drink as effectually as it makes them refrain during a great part of the year from the use of animal food, and if it could instil into their minds a few simple moral principles as successfully as it has inspired them with a belief in the efficacy of the sacraments, it would certainly confer on them an inestimable benefit. But this is, for the present at least, not to be expected. The great majority of the parish clergy are men utterly

unfit for such a task, and the few who have any aspirations in that direction rarely, if ever, acquire a perceptible moral influence over their parishioners. How far the ecclesiastical reforms which are at present being attempted may be successful in this respect, it is impossible to say, but it must be confessed that there is at present nothing to justify optimistic predictions. Perhaps more is to be expected from the schoolmaster than from the priest, but it will be long before education can produce even a partial moral regeneration. Its first influence — strange as the assertion may seem — is often in a diametrically opposite direction. When only one or two peasants in the village can read and write they have such facilities for overreaching their neighbours that they are very apt to employ their knowledge for dishonest purposes; and thus it occasionally happens that the man who has the most education is the greatest scoundrel in the *Mir*. This is sometimes used as an argument by the opponents of popular education, but in reality it is a reason for disseminating primary instruction as rapidly as possible. When the majority of the peasantry will be able to read and write they will present a less inviting field for swindling, and the temptations to dishonesty will be proportionately diminished.

But is there no more rapid method of improving the existing state of things? To arrive at material well-being through moral regeneration may be a very sure, but it is certainly a very roundabout, way. Though attention to hygienic conditions is the best

means of promoting health and diminishing mortality, it is sometimes well to use medicinal remedies, and even to call in the assistance of the surgical operator. Is not this a case in which the legislative lancet might be employed with advantage? In order to answer this question we must consider the diagnoses of those who propose legislative remedies. We pass, therefore, to the second of the three groups above enumerated.

Those who propose as a remedy more or less profound modifications in the existing Communal institutions may be divided into two categories: the one declaring that the evil lies in the Communal administration as at present organised, the other holding that it lies in the fundamental principle of the Commune. Let us examine these two opinions successively.

At the time when the Emancipation question was being discussed, the great majority of the educated classes in Russia were seized with a fanatical belief in the wonderful efficacy of local, ultra-democratic self-government, and the Emancipation Law was elaborated under the influence of this belief. The Communes received almost complete autonomy, and the landed proprietors were carefully excluded from the administration and jurisdiction of the Volost. Thus was produced a most singular phenomenon: a vast system of peasant self-government, carefully protected from the influence of the other social classes — so carefully that even the proprietor whose estate lies in the middle of the Volost has no right to meddle

in Volost affairs. Great expectations were entertained as to the result of this ingenious contrivance, but the expectations have not been realised, and a certain number of influential people now declare that this peculiar administration is the chief cause of the present unsatisfactory condition of the peasantry.

That the peasant self-government is very far from being in a satisfactory condition must be admitted by any impartial observer. The more laborious and well-to-do peasants do all in their power to escape election as office-bearers, and leave the administration in the hands of the less respectable members. In the ordinary course of affairs there is little evidence of administration of any kind, and in cases of public disaster, such as a fire or a visitation of the cattle-plague, the authorities seem to be apathetic and powerless. Not unfrequently a Volost Elder trades with the money he collects as dues or taxes; and sometimes, when he becomes insolvent, the peasants have to pay their taxes and dues a second time. The Volost Court is very often accessible to the influence of *vódka* and other kinds of bribery, so that in many districts it has fallen into utter discredit, and the peasants say that any one who becomes a judge "takes a sin on his soul." The Village Assemblies, too, have become worse than they were in the days of serfage. At that time the Heads of Households — who, it must be remembered, have alone a voice in the decisions — were few in number, laborious, and well-to-do, and they kept the lazy, unruly members under strict control; now that the large families have

been broken up, and almost every adult peasant is Head of a Household, the Communal affairs are often decided by a noisy majority; and almost any Communal decision may be obtained by "treating the *Mir*" — that is to say, by supplying a certain amount of *vódka*. Often I have heard old peasants speak of these things, and finish their recital by some such remark as this: "There is no order now; the people have been spoiled; it was better in the time of the masters."

These evils are very real, and I have no desire to extenuate them, but I believe they are by no means so great as is commonly supposed. Public opinion is greatly influenced by the philippics of proprietors who are smarting under some personal annoyance which cannot now be removed by the former summary procedure. I have frequently heard proprietors affirm that it is no longer possible to live in the country, that it will soon be necessary to build fortified castles, and much more of the same kind; but I have never — though I have lived a good deal in the country — seen anything which could afford the slightest foundation for such exaggerated statements. Many demand from the peasant administration a great deal that no administration could possibly effect, and consequently not a few of the most common complaints have no real foundation. To effect what these proprietors desire, it would be necessary to confer on the Volost Elders or on some other office-bearer the patriarchal authority formerly wielded by the proprietor, which would be

tantamount to reintroducing the worst element of the old order of things.

The complaints, it is true, do not come from the proprietors alone; old peasants may be heard to say that there is less order now than formerly. Such statements must not, however, be taken too literally. All old men are apt to regret the good old times — especially if recent changes have deprived them in part of their authority — and to this rule the Russian peasantry are no exception. In their struggle with the difficulties of the present they are apt to forget or involuntarily to tone down the hardships and evils of the past. That the occasional complaints of old men against the present Village Assemblies are exaggerated, I am convinced not only by general considerations, but by a very significant fact. If the lazy, worthless members of the Commune had really the direction of Communal affairs we should find that in the Northern Agricultural Zone, where it is necessary to manure the soil, the periodical redistributions of the Communal land would be very frequent; for in a new distribution the lazy peasant has a good chance of getting a well-manured lot in exchange for the lot which he has exhausted. Now, so far as my observations extend, I have found — much, I confess, to my astonishment — nothing of the kind. In all, or nearly all, of the Communes which I have visited throughout this part of the country I have found that no general redistribution has taken place since the Emancipation. It would be very interesting to know how

far my observations on this point represent truly the actual state of things, but, unfortunately, no statistical data bearing on the subject have as yet been collected.

Even if it be admitted that the peasant self-government is as defective as is commonly supposed, it does not follow that the suggestions of those who propose to abolish it should be adopted. It might be well to introduce after mature consideration some partial modifications; but no good, I am convinced, would result from violent changes. It is still too soon to condemn these new institutions, and certainly too soon to pass sentence of death upon them. The peasantry were suddenly raised from serfage to self-government, and they have had as yet only fifteen years to become accustomed to their new position.[1] Efficient self-government cannot possibly come into existence in such a short space of time. I say "come into existence" advisedly, for self-government cannot be, properly speaking, created by legislation. All that legislation can do is to remove obstacles and create forms: the spirit which is to animate these forms must come from the people, and can be generated only by long experience. The experience of the last fifteen years has been for the Russian peasants by no means fruitless. Many of them are fully conscious of the existing evils, and are sincerely desirous that they should be rooted out. That is already a great step towards amelioration, for the means of remedying the evils are within easy

[1] This was written in 1870, and the progress since made has been slow.

reach. When the peasants find, for instance, that the Volost Elder has not been regularly paying into the Treasury the money collected as taxes and dues, and that they have in consequence to pay their taxes and dues a second time, they will be pretty sure to insist in future on *seeing* the Treasury receipts, which the Elder says he has received. The Russian peasant is not disposed to do much for the sake of general abstract morality, but when he finds that an administrative abuse directly affects his own pocket, he loses a great deal of his accustomed apathy. It seems to me, therefore, that it would be much better to leave the peasants to themselves, and allow them to learn from experience those lessons that can be learned in no other way.

The oft-repeated assertion that the present organisation opposes a formidable barrier to the civilising influence of the educated classes can have little weight with any one who knows intimately the details of Russian country life. Any proprietor who is able and willing to exert a civilising influence on his uneducated neighbours has no need of administrative authority to assist him in his task, and those who cannot acquire this influence by their own efforts would in all probability abuse any authority entrusted to them. The proprietors possessed unlimited authority over their serfs for many generations and it cannot be said that their civilising influence was very great. The truth is, the assertion is repeated by those who think it would be a fine thing to have such an influence, but do not

wish to take the trouble of acquiring it in a natural legitimate way. We have here another example of the unfortunate tendency — so common in Russia — to trust to legislative enactments and administrative forms, rather than to personal exertion and self-help.

Any violent change in the existing institutions would, I believe, not only be useless, but might be followed by very mischievous consequences. As an illustration of this I may point to the Volost Courts, which are in many localities the worst part of the rural administration.

In the time of serfage some Communes elected judges (*pravosūdi*) from among their members, but in the great majority of estates quarrels were decided by the proprietor or his steward, and petty criminal offences were punished by the same authority. Since the Emancipation, Volost Courts with peasant judges have been created on the model of those which previously existed on the state Demesnes. The unsatisfactory condition of these courts and the means of improving them constitute one of the many "questions" which are at present warmly discussed. To many reformers the question seems very simple. Hearing on all sides that these courts are incompetent and corrupt, and that the Justices of the Peace, on the contrary, give general satisfaction, they propose without further consideration that the Volost Court should be abolished, and its jurisdiction handed over to the Justices. This method of solving the difficulty may be very simple,

but it is very imperfect. The Volost Courts are guided merely by traditional custom and plain common sense, whilst the Justice of the Peace has to judge according to the civil law, which is unknown to the peasantry and inapplicable to their affairs. Few, if any, Justices have a sufficiently intimate knowledge of the minute details of peasant life to be able to decide fairly the cases that are brought before the Volost Courts; and even if a Justice had sufficient knowledge he could not adopt the moral and juridical notions of the peasantry. These are often very different from those of the upper classes. In cases of matrimonial separation, for instance, the educated man naturally assumes that, if there is any question of aliment, it should be paid by the husband to the wife. The peasant, on the contrary, assumes as naturally that it should be paid by the wife to the husband — or rather to the Head of the Household — as a compensation for the loss of labour which her desertion involves. Many similar peculiarities in the juridical conceptions of the peasantry might be quoted.

But why should we not apply to the peasantry, say the reformers of the Peter the Great school, those higher principles of justice which are to be found in the written law and in the consciousness of the educated classes? Therein precisely, in my opinion, lies the danger. If the *Lex Scripta* were applied suddenly to that sphere of relations in which all has hitherto been regulated by custom, it would produce a revolution in the peasant's moral con-

ceptions, and complete the work of undermining and overthrowing his ideas of right and wrong — a work that is already sufficiently advanced. There can be no doubt that the moral laxity and limpness which may be remarked in the lower classes in Russia are to some extent the result of those violent reforms which have been so frequent during the last two centuries of Russian history. The list is already long enough without adding to it the summary abolition of the Volost Courts and the application of the written law to all peasant affairs.

Let us glance now at the opinions of those who hold that the material progress of the peasantry is prevented chiefly, not by the mere abuses of the Communal administration, but by the essential principles of the Communal institutions. Serfage, say those who adopt this view, has been abolished only in name. Formerly the peasant was the serf of the proprietor; now he is the serf of the Commune. He is still attached to the land, and cannot leave his home even for a short period without receiving from the Commune a formal permission, for which he has often to pay a most exorbitant sum. When he has found profitable employment in the towns, or in some other part of the country, the Commune may at any moment, and on the most futile pretext, order him to return home; and if he does not obey, he is brought back like a convict. He receives a share of the Communal land, but he has no inducement to improve it, for he knows that the Commune

may at any time make a redistribution of the land, and that in this way the labour he has expended on his share will be lost to him.

I cannot enter here on the *quaestio vexata* regarding the advantages and disadvantages of Communal property, but I shall endeavour to clear away a little of the confusion in which the subject is enveloped. Those who write and talk on the matter almost always overlook the important fact that the Commune has not everywhere the same nature and functions. In the Black-Earth Zone, where the annual dues are less than the normal rent of the land, to belong to a Commune is a privilege; in the Northern Agricultural Zone, on the contrary, where the dues exceed the normal rent, to belong to a Commune is a burden. Now it must be admitted that in the northern regions the Commune has really taken the place of the serf-proprietors, and holds its members in a state of semi-serfage; but it must in fairness be added that for this the Commune is not to blame. As it is held responsible for all dues and taxes, and these exceed the value of the benefits which it has to confer, it is obliged to retain its members by force, whether they desire to possess land or not. In short, the Commune in this part of the country has been transformed into a tax-gatherer, and it is obliged to use stringent measures, for the taxes are heavy, and it is responsible for their payment. What is called the Communal tyranny, therefore, must be laid, not to the account of the Commune, which is in this respect a mere instrument in the

hands of the financial administration, but to the account of the Emancipation Law, which compelled the serfs of this region to purchase their liberty under the disguise of paying for the land which was conferred on them without their consent. In the Black-Earth Zone, where the dues do not exceed the normal rent, and where, in consequence, the Commune has more the character of a voluntary association, we have few or no complaints of Communal tyranny. Here any member who wishes to absent himself can easily transfer his share of the land and of the burdens to some one of his neighbours who require more land than they actually possess. He may even, if he wishes, leave the Commune altogether, and inscribe himself as burgher in one of the towns; for the other members willingly consent to pay his dues in return for the share of land which he abandons. Thus, we see, many of the accusations which are commonly made against the Commune ought to be made against the system of dues established by the Government. However burdensome or odious a tax may be, the tax-collector cannot reasonably be blamed for simply doing his duty, especially if he has been made a tax-collector against his will.

There still remains, however, the difficult question as to how far the Communal right of property in the land and the periodical redistribution to which it gives rise impose restrictions on the peasant's liberty of action in the cultivation of his share, and deprive him of all inducements to improve the soil.

From the theoretical point of view this question is one of great interest, and will doubtless acquire in the future an immense practical significance, but for the present it has not, in my opinion, the importance which is usually attributed to it. There can be no doubt that it is much more difficult to farm well on a large number of narrow strips of land, many of which are at a considerable distance from the farmyard, than on a compact piece of land which the farmer may divide and employ as he pleases; and there can be as little doubt that the husbandman is more likely to improve his land if his tenure is secure, or if he is sure to obtain, in case of ejectment, a fitting remuneration for capital and labour expended. All this, and much more of the same kind, must be accepted as indisputable truths, but they have little direct bearing on the practical question under consideration. We are not considering in the abstract whether it would be better that the peasant should be a farmer with abundant capital and all the modern scientific appliances, but simply the practical question: What are the obstructions which at present prevent the peasant from ameliorating his actual condition? Let us beware, then, of wandering from the subject in hand.

The Commune is supposed to have an obstructive influence in two ways: (1) by preventing good cultivation according to the agricultural methods actually in use; (2) by preventing the peasantry from undertaking permanent improvements and passing to a higher mode of agriculture. It will be

well to submit these two propositions to the test of experience.

That the Commune prevents the peasantry from adopting various systems of high farming is a supposition which scarcely requires serious consideration. The peasants do not yet think of any change of the kind; and if they did think of it, they have neither the knowledge nor the capital necessary to effect it. In many villages a few of the richer and more intelligent peasants have bought land and cultivate it as they please, free from all Communal restraints; and I have always found that they cultivate this property precisely in the same way as their share of the Communal land. If no striving towards a higher system of cultivation has yet appeared among these men, who may be assumed to be, as a rule, more intelligent, laborious, and energetic than their fellows, we may safely conclude that the others have not yet begun to think of the matter. As to minor changes, such as the introduction of a new kind of culture, we know by experience that the Mir opposes to them no serious obstacles. The cultivation of beet for the production of sugar has within the last few years greatly increased in the central and south-western provinces, and flax is now largely produced in Communes in northern districts where it was formerly cultivated merely for domestic use. The Communal system is, in fact, extremely elastic, and may be modified almost to any extent as soon as the majority of the members consider modifications profitable. When

the peasants begin to think of permanent improvements, such as drainage, irrigation, and the like, they will find the Communal institutions a help rather than an obstruction; for such improvements, if undertaken at all, must be undertaken on a large scale, and the Mir is an already existing association. The only permanent improvements which can be for the present profitably undertaken consist in the reclaiming of waste land; and such improvements are already sometimes attempted. I know at least of one case in which a Commune has reclaimed a considerable tract of waste land by means of hired labourers. Nor does the Mir prevent in this respect individual initiative. In many Communes of the northern provinces it is a received principle of custom law that if any member reclaims waste land he is allowed to retain possession of it for a number of years proportionate to the amount of labour expended.

But does not the Commune, as it exists, prevent good cultivation according to the mode of agriculture actually in use?

The ordinary mode of agriculture in Russia — except in the far north and in the steppe region, where the agriculture is of a peculiar kind, adapted to the local conditions — is the ordinary Three-field system in its simplest form. According to this system, good cultivation means, practically speaking, the plentiful use of manure. Does, then, the existence of the Mir prevent the peasants from manuring their fields well?

Many people, who speak on this subject in a very authoritative tone, seem to imagine that the peasants in general do not manure their fields at all. This idea is an utter mistake. In those regions, it is true, where the rich black soil still retains a large part of its virgin fertility, the manure is used as fuel, or simply thrown away, because the peasants believe that it would not be profitable to put it on their fields, and their conviction is, at least to some extent, well founded; but in the Northern Agricultural Zone, where unmanured soil gives almost no harvest, the peasants put upon their fields all the manure they possess. If they do not put enough it is simply because they have few cattle, and consequently not enough to put. In the intermediate region, where the soil is rapidly losing its natural fertility, they continue to throw away manure, when it might more profitably be put upon their fields; but this phenomenon is evidently to be explained by ignorance and the force of routine, and has nothing to do with the existence of the Commune. Many landed proprietors in these localities act in the same foolish way. As soon as the peasants become convinced that the use of manure will more than repay them for the additional labour, they invariably begin to employ it, and if they find it profitable they continue the practice.

But the peasantry of the northern provinces, it is urged, would increase the number of their cattle and put more manure on their land if they were not afraid of Communal injustice.

In reply to this objection we must begin by defining clearly what Communal injustice in this case means. There are two eventualities which the peasant is supposed to fear. In the first place, part of his cattle may be sold by auction by the Imperial police for Communal arrears, though he may have paid in full his own share of the taxes and dues; and in the second place, the Commune may make a general redistribution of the land, and give to others the plots or strips which he has carefully manured for several years.

The former of these eventualities does sometimes occur, and must have a certain deterrent influence on those peasants who desire to increase their live-stock; but here again the fault lies, not in the Commune, but in the existing financial system. These confiscations of private property for Communal obligations take place likewise in Little Russia, where the Commune, in the Russian sense of the term, does not exist.

The second eventuality is the favourite weapon of those who desire to see the Commune abolished; but it has, I believe, much less influence on the peasants than is commonly supposed. To give this weapon its full force, I shall assume with those who use it — a somewhat violent assumption, truly! — that the majority of the peasants are insensible to all claims of justice, that there is no such thing as Communal good faith, and that the majority of the members are always ready to rob the minority when they think it advantageous for themselves.

In a word, I shall leave out of view all moral considerations, and restrict myself to a simple examination of facts. And what do facts tell us? In the southern provinces, where no manure is required, the periodical redistributions take place almost every year; as we travel northward we find the term lengthens; and in the Northern Agricultural Zone, where manure is indispensable, general redistributions are almost unknown. In the province of Yaroslaff, for example, the Communal land is generally divided into two parts: the manured land lying near the village, and the unmanured land lying beyond. The latter alone is subject to frequent redistribution. On the former the existing tenures are rarely disturbed, and when it becomes necessary to give a share to a new household, the operation is effected with the least possible prejudice to vested rights.

Those who hold that the Mir really opposes serious obstacles to the economic progress of the rural population may be divided into two categories, according to the remedies which they propose. The one class consider that the principle of Communal property should be at once abolished, and that the Communal land should be broken up into a number of lots corresponding to the actual number of households. The other class propose that the Commune should be for the present preserved, but that its action should be regulated by certain legislative enactments.

Both of these projects seem to me a mistake.

The summary abolition of Communal property would produce an economic revolution, in comparison with which the Emancipation of the serfs would sink into insignificance, and this revolution I consider, for the reasons above stated, to be at present unnecessary. I do not share the views of those who believe that the Commune will for ever prevent the formation of a Proletariate, much less the wild dreams of those who see in it a panacea for nearly all social evils. On the contrary, I believe that the periodical redistribution of the land, which constitutes at present its most essential characteristic, will probably disappear. But it would be a grave error to effect suddenly and violently what will be effected gradually by the natural course of events. In this matter the peasants are the only competent judges, for they alone have a practical acquaintance with the working of the institution, and among them there are almost no Abolitionists. Every Commune has already the right to divide its land into lots, and to transfer irrevocably a lot to each family; but very few Communes, except those which received "the orphan's portion," have as yet shown any disposition to use this privilege.

The proposal to regulate the action of the Commune by legislative enactments is, I think, scarcely less objectionable. No doubt the time will come when the traditional conceptions which at present regulate that action will no longer suffice, and it will be necessary to supplement the custom law by positive legislation. But this time has not yet

arrived. The institution has still vitality enough to be in no need of extraneous guidance. It understands its own interests a great deal better than those who desire to legislate for it; and it is quite capable of making, in its constitution and mode of action, any modification which its interests may demand. That it should be an eyesore to genuine bureaucrats is intelligible enough, for it is the only institution in Russia which has hitherto escaped the blighting influence of administrative pupilage — the only institution which has genuine, spontaneous, independent life in it, and does not require to draw galvanic vitality from the central authority; but it is strange to see men, who imagine that they are partisans of self-government, doing all in their power to destroy the sole piece of real self-government which exists in the country. All the other organs of self-government in Russian are more or less artificial and ornamental, and the power which created them might at once demolish them without producing any serious perturbation; the Commune alone has deep roots in the traditions, the habits, and the everyday interests of the people. Again, I say the peasants are the most competent judges in this matter, and they have urgent reason to pray Heaven to protect them against their friends and self-constituted advocates.

We come now to the last group of critics and would-be reformers: those who consider that the peasants are prevented from improving their material well-being by the difficulties of the economic

position in which the Government has placed them, and who hold that the best remedy is a radical reform of the present financial system, together with organised emigration to the more fertile and less densely-peopled provinces. This is, I may say parenthetically, by far the most popular explanation of the phenomenon, and it is very natural that it should be so, for it represents the problem as extremely simple, and the remedy as easily procured. Besides this, it has a peculiarity which specially recommends it to the Russian mind; it enables those who adopt it to put the blame on the Government, and to look to the Government for the removal of the evil.

To treat adequately the question as to how far the present financial system in general and the mode of collecting the taxes in particular affect injuriously the welfare of the peasantry, it would be necessary to write a large volume. For the present I have no intention of attempting this task. All I can do in the limited space that can be here devoted to the subject is to give a few explanations which may perhaps dispel a little of the mist in which the question is commonly enveloped.

The direct taxes, in the wider sense of the term, which the peasants have to pay are of two kinds — taxes properly so called, and yearly dues paid for the land. These two kinds are often confounded — sometimes I suspect intentionally — but they ought to be kept carefully separate.

The taxes properly so called may be divided into

three categories — Imperial, Local, and Communal. Of these, the first is fixed by the State, the second by the Zemstvo or local elective administration, and the third by the Commune. All three combined amount to about nine roubles and a half per male, so that if we take two and a half as the average number of males in each family, we find that the average amount of direct taxation which falls upon each family is about twenty-three roubles and three-quarters, or roughly speaking about $15.00 of our money — a very heavy burden for the great majority of peasant families.

The land-dues cannot properly be called taxes, for the peasant receives in return for them the usufruct of a certain quantity of land: but it must be admitted that they have something of the nature of taxes, for they were not fixed by voluntary contract, but were imposed upon the peasantry, together with the land, without their consent. In some parts of the country, as I have already explained, this "imposition" is a privilege; in others it is a burden. In the former — that is to say, in those localities where the normal rent exceeds the dues — the peasant may liberate himself from the dues by giving up the land; in the latter — that is to say, where the dues exceed the normal rent — he cannot liberate himself in this way, for neither the Commune nor any of the individual members would voluntarily accept his land on such conditions. We may therefore fairly regard as taxation the part of the dues which remains after we have subtracted the normal

rent of the land. If, for example, we find that a peasant pays for his share of the Communal land eighteen roubles, whilst ten roubles would be a fair rent for it, we may fairly regard the remaining eight roubles as pure taxation.

Now, as a rule, it may be said that in the Southern Agricultural Zone this excess does not exist. The land is really worth more than the dues paid for it, and they, therefore, cannot be regarded as taxes at all. If the peasant wishes to free himself from them he has no difficulty in handing over his land to the Commune, or to some one of the individual members. In the Northern Agricultural Zone, on the contrary, there are few localities in which the peasant can thus liberate himself from the dues, for they are almost always in excess of the normal rent, and we must therefore regard a considerable part of them as taxation. If, now, this part of the dues be added to the taxes properly so called, it forms a large sum — a sum too heavy to be borne by peasants who live by agriculture alone. So long as it has to be paid yearly these peasants have no possibility of improving their condition. Nay, more, their condition is evidently becoming worse, for the official statistics show that the number of cattle in these regions is decreasing, and we know that decrease of cattle means less manure and less abundant harvests.

There is thus a certain amount of truth in the assertion that inordinate taxation is one of the chief obstacles with which the peasant has to contend

— especially in the Northern Agricultural Zone — but is there not some more general cause at work affecting all regions alike? some peculiarity in the actual economic position of the peasants, which places a formidable obstacle in the way of progress? I believe there is, and I shall now endeavour to explain it.

In the time of serfage the peasant families, as I have already remarked, were generally very large. They remained undivided, partly from the influence of patriarchal conceptions, but chiefly because the proprietors, perceiving the economic advantage of large families, prevented them from breaking up into independent units. As soon as the proprietor's authority was removed the process of disintegration began and spread rapidly. Every one wished to be independent, and in a very short time nearly every able-bodied married peasant had a house of his own. The influence of this on the Communal self-government I have already pointed out; its influence on the economic position of the peasantry was still more injurious. The building and keeping up of two or three houses instead of one necessarily entailed a large amount of extra expenditure. It must be remembered, too, that many a disaster which may be successfully resisted by a large family inevitably ruins a small one. But this is not the worst. To understand fully the injurious influence of this breaking up of families, we must consider the fact in conjunction with the Emancipation Law.

The Emancipation Law did not confer on the

peasants as much land as they require, and consequently the peasant who has merely his legal portion has neither enough of work nor enough of revenue. If the family were large this difficulty would be easily overcome. One member, with the help of his wife and sisters-in-law, and with the additional assistance of a hired labourer during the harvest-time, might cultivate the whole of the family land, whilst the other members sought occupation elsewhere, and sent or brought home money to pay the taxes and meet the necessary pecuniary outlay. When each able-bodied man is head of an independent household this form of domestic economy is of course impossible. Each head of a household is obliged either to remain at home or to entrust the cultivation of his share of the land to his wife. In the former case he has a great deal of idle time on his hands, unless he can rent land at a moderate price in the immediate vicinity; and in the latter case the harvests are pretty sure to be meagre, for a woman can rarely cultivate as well as a man, even when she has no domestic duties to attend to. In many localities the necessity of obtaining arable land in the immediate vicinity of the villages compels the peasants to pay what may fairly be termed "rack-rents."

How these evils are to be radically cured I do not profess to know, but I believe that much might be effected by a careful revision of the financial system in general and of the land-dues in particular. In addition to this it would be well to organ-

ise an extensive system of emigration, by which a portion of the peasantry would be transferred from the barren soil of the north and west to the rich fertile land of the eastern provinces.

Such are my conclusions regarding the present economic position of the emancipated serfs. They are the result of long and patient inquiry, but I must warn the reader against regarding them as anything more than the personal opinions of an unbiassed investigator.

One word as to the future. I think that there is far less ground for despondency than is commonly supposed. Russia is at present undergoing a great economic revolution, and is suffering from those evils which necessarily attend a period of transition. From the bold and, on the whole, successful way in which she solved the difficult problem of serf emancipation, we may confidently assume that she will in due time successfully overcome the agrarian difficulties that still lie before her.